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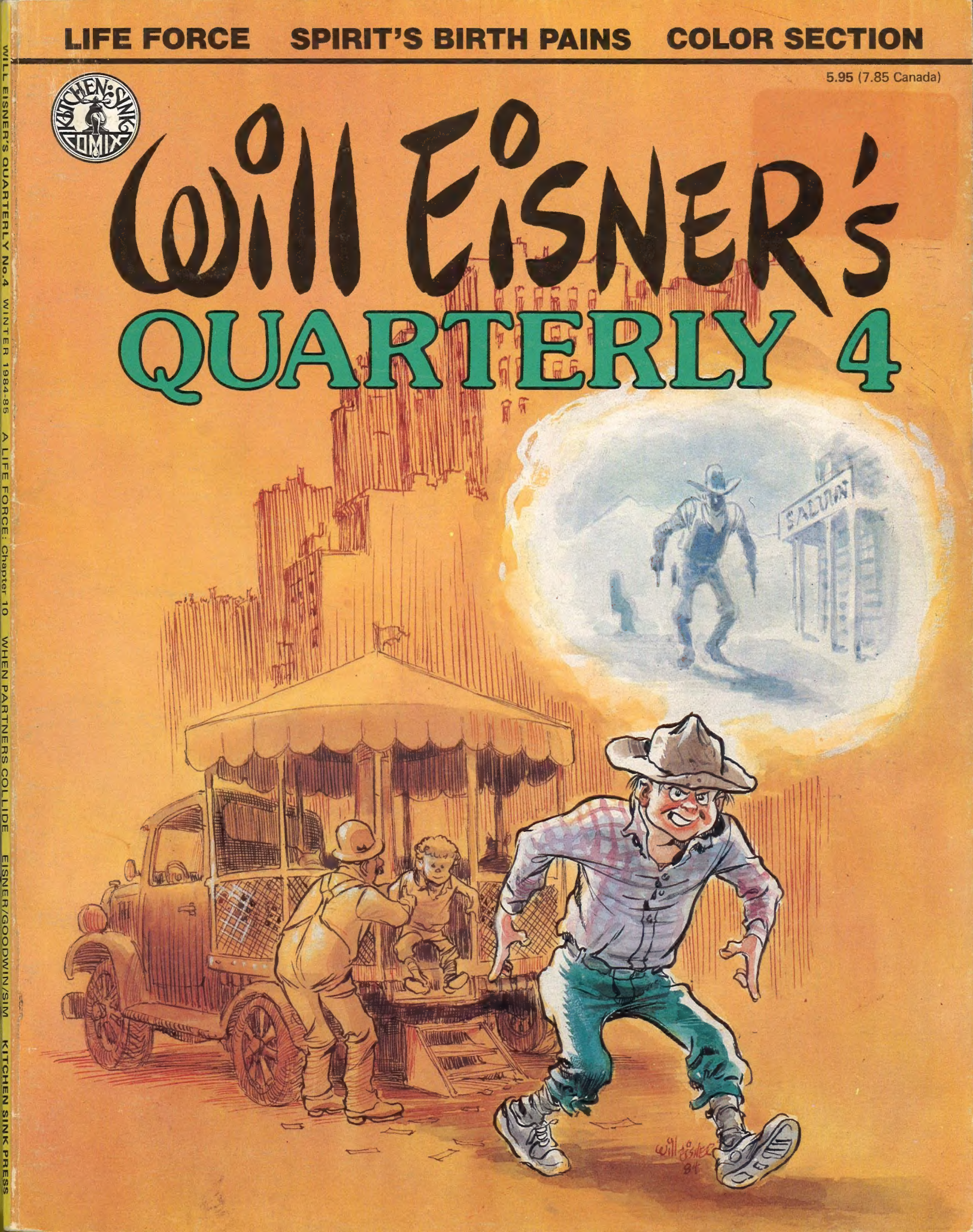
KITCHEN SINK COMIX

Will Eisner's QUARTERLY 4



WILL EISNER'S QUARTERLY No.4 WINTER 1984-85 A LIFE FORCE: Chapter 10 WHEN PARTNERS COLLIDE EISNER/GOODWIN/SIM KITCHEN SINK PRESS

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SPIRIT section courtesy of Bill Blackbeard and his San Francisco Academy of Comic Art.

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No.4 January 1985

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A Life Force

The story thus far...

This issue contains Chapters 10 and 11 of Will Eisner's graphic novel, *A Life Force.* The novel follows the lives of some of the residents of 55 Dropsie Avenue, the Bronx, during the Great Depression.

In the last issue, young Willie faced a hard decision: Should he join a group of radical friends at a demonstration—a demonstration which may prove violent—or should he stay in the security of his home and family. The decision is forced when his father discovers Willie and a friend painting signs for a mass meeting. The father orders the friend to take the signs and depart after an argument. Willie's father and Uncle Max had been visited by Black Hand "union organizers" earlier in the day. Max wound up with a head injury and brain damage when he was blackjacked by a thug. Willie's father was left with an extreme distaste for any union.

Willie is torn between leaving and staying until his mother asks him how many *kreplach* he would like in the chicken soup she's been preparing. Willie stays.

Jacob Shtarkah and his partner Angelo plan Rabbi Bensohn's new room, but the only lumber company that will extend credit to them is closing because the owner can't pay a $5,000 mortgage. Talking about his problem with Elton Shaftsbury, the Shabbasgoy, Jacob learns that with a bit of maneuvering on the part of the stock brokerage firm Shaftsbury works for, he and Angelo now own the lumberyard.

Stunned by the astounding turn of events, Jacob doesn't realize that Shaftsbury, a gentile, and Jacob's daughter, Rebecca, are in love.

Jacob gets another shock a few days later when Rabbi Bensohn gives him a letter from Frieda Gold, a woman Jacob almost married thirty years before in Germany.

A series of letters from Frieda reveals that she has a married daughter, and all three members of the family are being harassed in Germany. The rise of Hitler and the Nazi party has led to a growing repression of Jews in Germany. Anti-semitism runs rampant as the Nazis begin to isolate the Jews, forbidding them to interact with the "pure Aryans" in Germany.

The only solution, Frieda says, is for the family to come to America.

Jacob decides to assist them, and tries to work through the Immigration and Naturalization Service. However, bureaucratic indifference and delays lead to a hold-up of the family's visas. In the meantime, Frieda's son-in-law is arrested and her daughter decides to stay in Europe to help him. At this point, the ubiquitous Black Hand comes to the apparent rescue. For a nominal sum, the Black Hand expedites matters, and soon Frieda is on a boat leaving Europe.

Jacob reflects on what might have been between Frieda and himself thirty years ago, and wonders what will happen in the future.

As Chapter 10 opens, Frieda Gold arrives on America's shores. . .

even more in '84

monthly

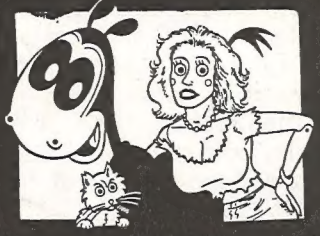
Cerebus

Ms. Tree

Journey

bimonthly

Neil the Horse



Normalman

Flaming Carrot

twice yearly

Swords of Cerebus

Aardvark Vanaheim

CHAPTER 10
AMERICA, AMERICA

JEWISH REFUGEES GET LOCAL HELP

JUNE 15, 1934

The New York Times reported that 259 refugees of the 430 Jews who arrived in New York during May had fled from Nazi Germany. Of these a few came from other countries in Europe where they had fled earlier.

FEWER IMMIGRANTS AT ELLIS ISLAND NOW

JULY 8, 1934

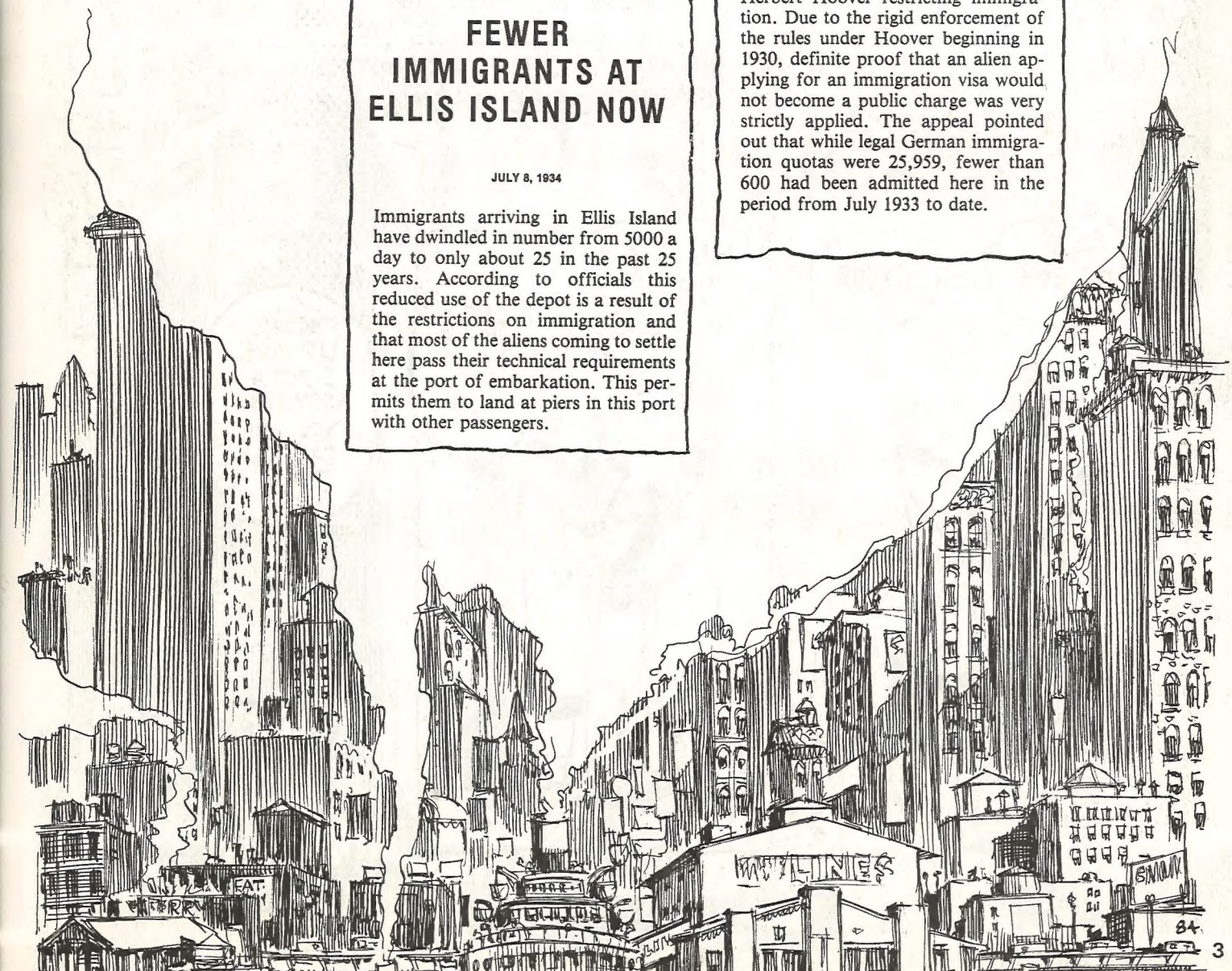
Immigrants arriving in Ellis Island have dwindled in number from 5000 a day to only about 25 in the past 25 years. According to officials this reduced use of the depot is a result of the restrictions on immigration and that most of the aliens coming to settle here pass their technical requirements at the port of embarkation. This permits them to land at piers in this port with other passengers.

AMERICAN GROUP ASKS U.S. HAVEN FOR NAZI VICTIMS

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT ASKED TO EASE CURB ON IMMIGRATION

MARCH 19, 1934

Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, chairman of a committee of outstanding American women appealed to President Roosevelt for relief from an executive order issued by former President Herbert Hoover restricting immigration. Due to the rigid enforcement of the rules under Hoover beginning in 1930, definite proof that an alien applying for an immigration visa would not become a public charge was very strictly applied. The appeal pointed out that while legal German immigration quotas were 25,959, fewer than 600 had been admitted here in the period from July 1933 to date.



AT LONG LAST,
FRIEDA GOLD ARRIVED IN AMERICA.
BEHIND HER WERE THE ASHES OF
A ONCE-SECURE MIDDLE CLASS LIFE
WHERE SHE HAD TAKEN FOR GRANTED...
THE COMFORT OF BELONGING.

FRIEDA, FRIEDA
JACOB!
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL! I RECOGNIZED YOU AT ONCE...
OH, JACOB, I'M AN OLD LADY NOW!
COME... UPTOWN, I GOT A ROOM FOR YOU... WE CAN TALK THERE!

AHHH SO, THIS IS AMERICA ... AT LAST, AT LAST... I CAN'T YET BELIEVE I'M HERE!
WE'RE IN THE BRONX... YOU CAN SEE FROM HERE WHERE I LIVE... ON THE NEXT BLOCK... ITS DROPSIE AVENUE!
JACOB, HOW WILL I PAY THE RENT HERE!
DON'T WORRY, FRIEDA... I PAID SIX MONTHS IN ADVANCE... MEANWHILE, YOU CAN WORK IN MY LUMBER YARD - IN THE OFFICE! YOU'LL LIVE YOU'LL ... LIVE!
OH, WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT A LUMBER YARD?!
DON'T WORRY, YOU CAN SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH AND YOU HELPED IN YOUR HUSBAND'S STORE - YOU KNOW A LITTLE BOOK-KEEPING... WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED?
IT'LL BE ALRIGHT! I ALREADY TALKED TO MY PARTNER, ANGELO... HE AGREES!
ITS ALL HAPPENING LIKE A DREAM!

WHAT HAPPENED TO US BACK THEN IN NUREMBERG?! WHY DIDN'T YOU MARRY ME?
IT WAS MY MOTHER.. SHE SAID I WOULD BE THROWING MYSELF AWAY ON A POOR BOY WHO WANTED ONLY TO BE A WOOD WORKER AND WRITE POEMS!
NO, NO... I WANTED TO BE A SCULPTOR... WE WERE LOVERS ONE DAY AND ON THE NEXT IT WAS OVER... GEFINISHED!
SO, I LEFT AND CAME TO AMERICA!
...WELL, ANYHOW, YOU GOT MARRIED! HAS IT BEEN HAPPY?
SO, I HAVE A SON, DANIEL... THE DOCTOR, AND A DAUGHTER... REBECCA, A TEACHER! MY WIFE, RIFKA?? WELL, SHE'S A WIFE! WHAT CAN I TELL YOU?
...YOU LOVE HER??
DO I LOVE RIFKA? ...AFTER 30 YEARS MARRIED... WHO KNOWS HOW MUCH IS LOVE AND HOW MUCH IS HABIT?
I ONLY KNOW THAT WHEN I GOT YOUR LETTERS SOMETHING INSIDE ME CAME TO LIFE AGAIN--A DREAM LOCKED UP IN THERE THAT WANTS, NOW, TO COME OUT... MAYBE IT'S WANTING TO STAY ALIVE FOR SOMETHING MORE THAN SUPPER... YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY, FRIEDA?
OH, JACOB WE'RE DIFFERENT PEOPLE NOW... WE'VE LIVED DIFFERENT LIVES! WE CAN'T BRING BACK THE PAST... I... I THINK YOU'D BETTER GO HOME NOW, SO I CAN SETTLE IN... TOMORROW I'LL COME TO WORK IN YOUR LUMBER YARD!

JACOB, YOU'RE LATE FOR SUPPER!
YES, RIFKA !!
LISTEN, I WANT YOU SHOULD TALK TO REBECCA... SHE'S SEEING TOO MUCH OF THAT ELTON, NEXT DOOR !!
YES, YES !!
WHAT IS GOING ON? EVERYBODY KEEPS THINGS FROM ME!
RIFKA...IN YOUR CONDITION - NO ONE WANTS TO 'AGGRAVATE' YOU!
KNOK KNOK
EXCUSE ME, JACOB... I NEED YOU IN THE YARD
I'M COMING ANGELO!
YOU DIDN'T FINISH!
NU?? ANGELO... WHAT'S HAPPENED?
DUNNO IF IT'S GOOD OR BAD... PETE, MY PAISAN FROM THE SOCIETY... Y'REMEMBER? HE GOT FRIEDA'S VISA! WELL HE'S AT THE YARD... WANTS TO TALK BUSINESS!
WHOSE TRUCK IS THAT?
IT'S PETE'S! HE'S IN OUR OFFICE, JACOB
LOMBARDI
LUMBER YARD
OFFICE

HELLO, MR. PETE!! IF YOU'RE HERE TO COLLECT FOR THE VISA... DON'T WORRY... I'LL PAY THE $200 NEXT WEEK... I'M A MAN OF MY WORD!
NO, NO, NO.. I TRUST YOU... I GOT SOMETHIN' ELSE...
I'M NOW IN THE SHIPPING BUSINESS... SOMETIMES I GOT EXTRA LUMBER ... SO I GOTTA SELL IT, SEE?
SO,? WE'RE A SMALL YARD.., WE CAN'T BUY MUCH!
NO PROBLEM... I NEED AN OUTLET... SO, BECAUSE ANGELO'S MY PAISAN - I'M GONNA MAKE YOU GUYS A TERRIFIC PROPOSITION.. I'M GONNA SELL YOU LUMBER AT HALF PRICE, SEE!
HOW MUCH LUMBER YOU GOT TO SELL
10,000 FEET
OY! WE CAN'T AFFORD THAT MUCH!
NO WORRY, Y' PAY ME WHEN YOU SELL... I TRUST YOU
MAHDOAN, JACOB, IT'S A GOOD DEAL!
I SEE, PETE.. YOU ALREADY UNLOADED IN OUR YARD!
SHOO... I KNEW YOU GUYS COULDN'T REFUSE A SWEET DEAL LIKE THIS!
OFFICE

MEMBERS N.Y. STOCK EXCHANGE
SMITH & WHITE
BROKERS
SIXTH FLOOR
AH... SHAFTSBURY, MR. SMITH AND MR. WEISS WANT TO SEE YOU
WE HAVE THE SIX MONTH FIGURES ON LOMBARDI.. THEIR SALES AND PROFITS HAVE SOARED SINCE WE BOUGHT IN!
GREAT, HOW COME?
SIMPLE, THEY'VE BEEN BUYING THE LUMBER AT HALF OF WHAT THEIR COMPETITION PAYS!
CONGRATULATIONS, SHAFTSBURY.. YOU WERE RIGHT ON THIS DEAL... WE'RE TAKING LOMBARDI LUMBER PUBLIC.. AS WE PLANNED!
I'LL START THE PAPERS AT ONCE! GOT TO GET THRU THE NEW RED TAPE ON NEW ISSUES IN WASHINGTON
YEAH... WITH THAT GODDAM PINKO F.D. ROOSEVELT DOWN THERE.. WE ARE GETTING A CREEPING SOCIALISM
GOOD JOB, SHAFTSBURY!
THANKS
HEY, WEISS... DID Y' HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE JEW AND THE NIGGER HAW... HAW..
ER:: NO TIME NOW, SMITH!
HELLO, JACOB... THIS IS ELTON... I'VE GOT GOOD NEWS.. BE RIGHT OVER!
GOING PUBLIC? SO, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
IT MEANS THAT THE SHARES OF LOMBARDI LUMBER WILL BE TRADED ON THE STOCK EXCHANGE ... THEY'LL SELL AT ABOUT $5.00 PER SHARE AT THE OPENING!!
MAHMA MIA... WE GOT:: 75,000 SHARES
90

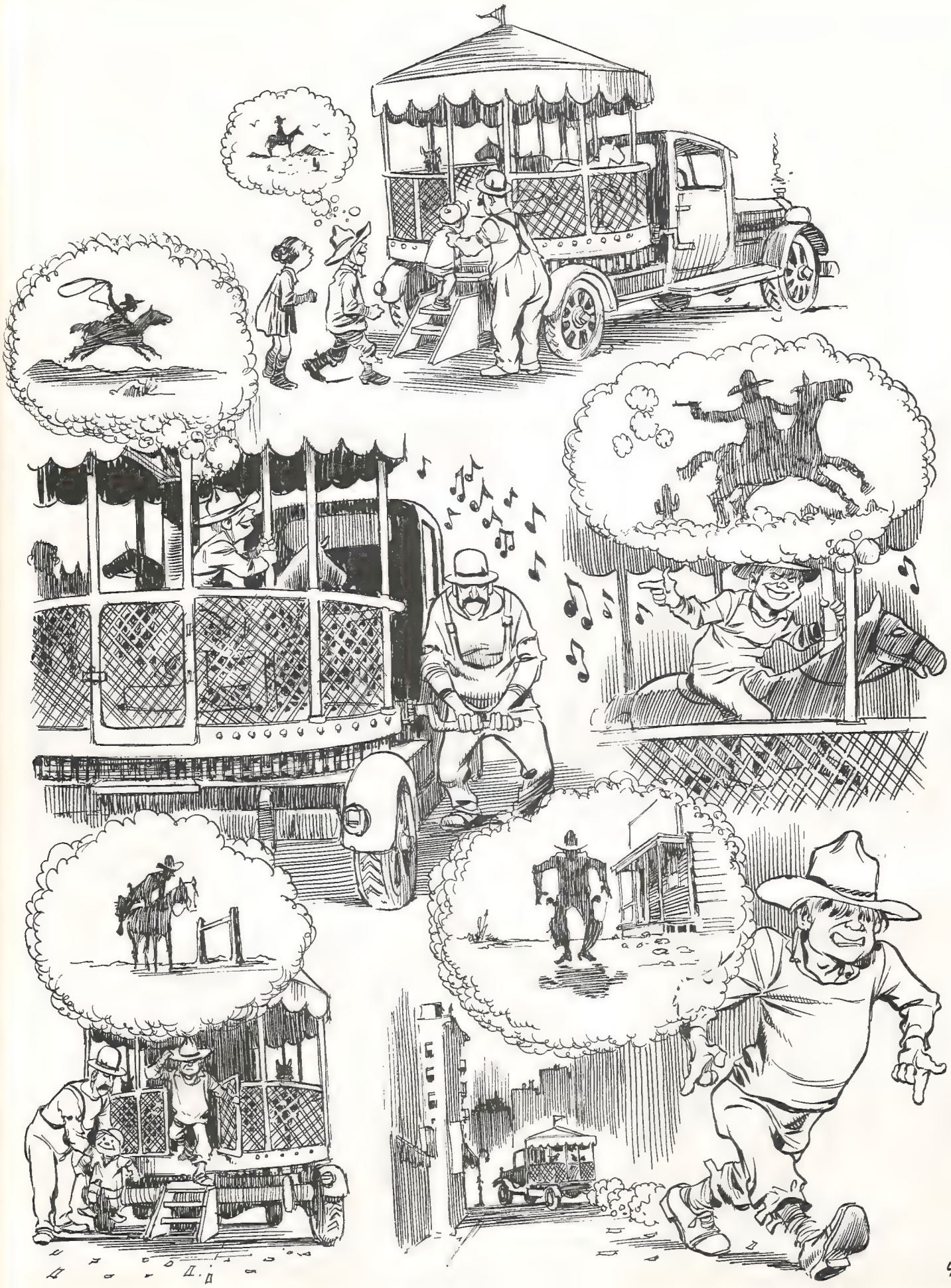
WE'RE GONNA BE RICH... OY...I'M DIZZY!
ANGELO... CAN YOU COUNT ON YOUR SUPPLIER? I'M WORRIED!
I MEAN, YOUR PROFITS WILL DEPEND ON THE CONTINUATION OF CHEAP PRICES!
SHOO! PETE'S MY PAISAN... HE WON'T LET US DOWN!
SO?? ELTON... WILL YOU MAKE MONEY, TOO?
OH, YES, JACOB!
I'LL GET A GOOD COMMISSION... AND MAYBE I'LL BE A PARTNER SOON!
YOU'RE A FINE YOUNG MAN... YOU DESERVE A LITTLE GOOD LUCK
...MATTER OF FACT, JACOB I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT -ER- SOMETHING...
I CAN GUESS...IT'S A GIRL! YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED... AM I RIGHT?... SO, WHY NOT?? YOU'RE DOING WELL NOW... SO WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?!...
WELL... AS A MATTER OF FACT SHE... IT'S REBECCA!
MY DAUGHTER, REBECCA?
YOU OKAY, JACOB..?? HEY... ARE YOU ALRIGHT ??

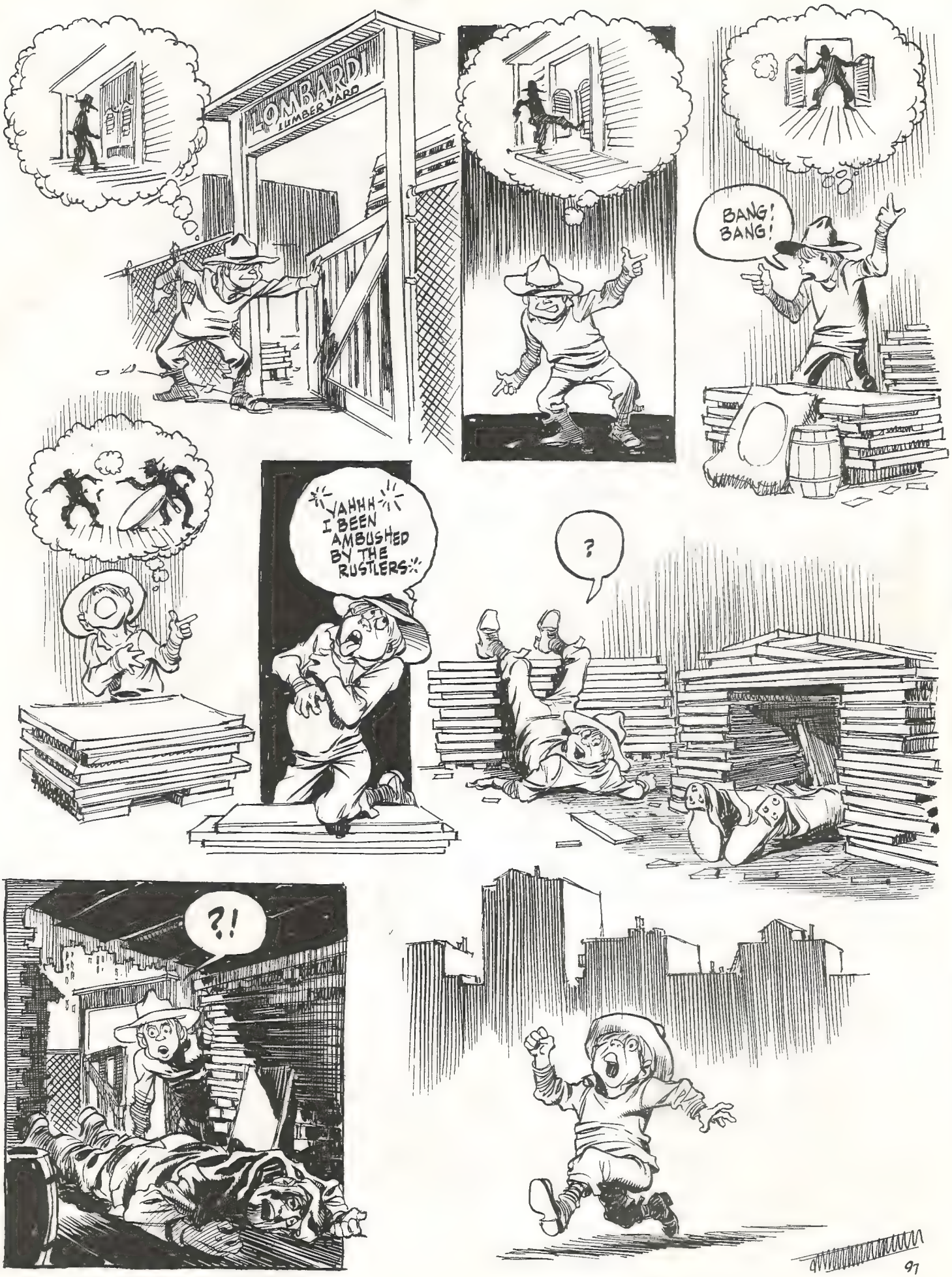
NO...NO...JUSTALITTLE INDIGESTION
LISTEN TO ME, ELTON PLEASE
I BEG YOU RECONSIDER ...IT'S SERIOUS !!!
BUT I LOVE HER, JACOB
AND SHE LOVES YOU?
YES, I BELIEVE SO!
SO, DO YOU READ THE PAPERS..WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD... IN GERMANY?
WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH IT?
SHE'S JEWISH - YOU'RE NOT!
SO?
LET ME SPEAK FRANKLY! ANTI-SEMITIC FEVER IS INFECTING THE WORLD ... LIKE A GERM INSIDE WHICH COMES OUT WHEN TIMES ARE BAD...LATER, WHEN THE ROMANCE WEARS OFF, MAYBE YOU'LL HAVE TROUBLE...
OH... COME NOW, JACOB, THAT'S NONSENSE !!
REBECCA AND I ARE IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER FOR OURSELVES ...I DON'T CARE IF SHE'S A HOTTENTOT... THIS IS AMERICA 1935!
JACOB ?!
MUMBLE MUMBLE
HOW CAN I EXPECT HIM TO UNDERSTAND!

GOOD MORNING, FRIEDA!
LUMBER YARD
OMBARD
LUMBER YARD
OH, JACOB... THESE BILLS... DO WE GET AN INVOICE FROM ANGELO'S FRIEND, PETE?
DON'T BOTHER ME NOW, FRIEDA !!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, JACOB?
MY DAUGHTER REBECCA IS GOING TO MARRY ELTON SHAFTSBURY!
MAZZLETOV!
BUT ELTON IS A..A.. GOY!
SO,... IT HAPPENS... MY OWN DAUGHTER ALSO MARRIED A GENTILE IN EUROPE... THEY WERE HAPPY TOGETHER.. THE NAZI BUSINESS DIDN'T DESTROY THEIR LOVE!
I CAN'T ACCEPT SUCH A MARRIAGE!! IT PUTS AN END TO SOMETHING... A... A TRADITION MAYBE... BUT FOR ME, IT HAS TO DO WITH SURVIVING!!

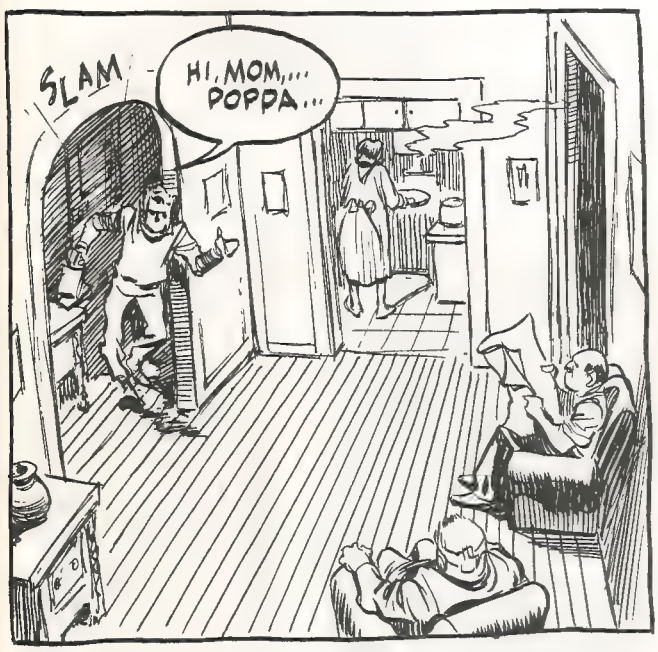
LOVE!! IT SOUNDS NICE BUT IS IT A REALITY IN THE BUSINESS OF LIVING?
...OH I DON'T KNOW... SO, MAYBE LOVE IS A KIND OF SURVIVAL... A... A FORCE OF LIFE... OH ITS TOO DEEP FOR ME...
SO, I ASK YOU... WHAT KIND OF FORCE IS LOVE... DOES IT HELP THE COCKROACH TO STAY ALIVE?
NO..NO!! I CAN'T ACCEPT IT! ...YET, I'M DEALING WITH SOMETHING I CAN'T STOP!
SO?
SO, THEY'LL MARRY WITH, OR- WITHOUT MY APPROVAL ANYHOW
...HOW CAN I FIGHT IT!?
THEN, DON'T
DON'T KILL THEIR LOVE!
FRIEDA, IT'S SO EASY TO TALK OVER THESE THINGS WITH YOU!
YES, YES... I HAVE A LOT OF WORK... HMM WHY DO WE HAVE TO PAY CASH TO PETE FOR HIS LUMBER.. I DON'T LIKE IT... HMMMM
...OY.. IT WILL KILL MY WIFE, RIFKA! ...WELL... SO, GO BACK TO WORK NOW, HILDA!

THE GUNFIGHTER
MAMA!! GIMME A NICKEL!
WHAT FOR?
THE MERRY-GO-ROUND MAN IS COMIN!
HERE!
MA! GIMME MY COWBOY HAT!

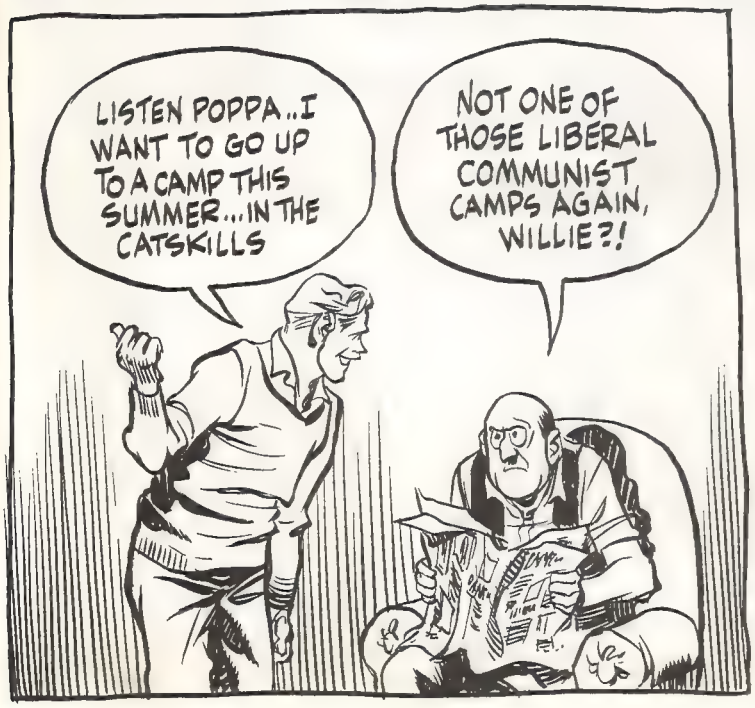



LOMBARDI
LUMBER YARD
BANG! BANG!
YAHHH I BEEN AMBUSHED BY THE RUSTLERS
?
?!

WILLIE! I GOTTA TELL YOU A SECRET!
DON'T BOTHER ME NOW, YUSSIE


SLAM
HI, MOM,... POPPA...

SO, HOW'S UNCLE MAX... ??
SO, HOW SHOULD HE BE?? SINCE HE WAS BEATEN UP BY THEM UNION GOONS,,, HE JUST SITS THERE...A NOTHING!


LISTEN POPPA..I WANT TO GO UP TO A CAMP THIS SUMMER...IN THE CATSKILLS
NOT ONE OF THOSE LIBERAL COMMUNIST CAMPS AGAIN, WILLIE?!

LISTEN... WITH MAX, HIS HEAD AINT RIGHT,,, SO, I'M STRUGGLING TO KEEP THE SHOP GOING!!
BUT, POPPA!
98

NO BUTS!! THIS SUMMER YOU'RE GONNA WORK FOR ME IN THE FACTORY DELIVERING COATS
PLEASE, NOT SO LOUD! IT MAKES MAX NERVOUS!
AW, POP!
YUSSIE'S MOTHER IS LOOKING FOR HIM. DID YOU SEE HIM, WILLIE??
YAHH... HE'S DOWNSTAIRS - ON THE STOOP!!
WELL, DID YOU TALK TO MY FATHER TODAY, ELTON?
YES,

HOW DID MY FATHER TAKE THE NEWS ABOUT US ? DID HE FORBID IT ??
NOT EXACTLY...HE JUST WALKED AWAY MUMBLING TO HIMSELF !
REBECCA...I LOVE YOU...YOU'VE GIVEN MY LIFE MEANING ! ...LET'S JUST RUN OFF AND...
OH...ELTON... I...I...CANT...I... OH,GOD,IT'S ALL SO COMPLICATED !
SIGH
REBECCA
?
?!
BRRR
YUSSIE... WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT ?
HE'S TREMBLING !!
TELL ME... WHAT'S THE MATTER ?
WHAT'S HE SAYING ?
OH MY GOD ! HE SAYS HE SAW A DEAD MAN IN LOMBARDI'S LUMBER YARD !

DON'T BE AFRAID, YUSSIE ... I'M WITH YOU ... JUST SHOW ME WHERE YOU SAW HIM ...
OFFICE
THERE ... HE WAS UNDER THAT PILE OF WOOD ...
HE'S GONE !!
MAYBE YOU WERE JUST IMAGINING ...
!?
NO ... NO ... NO ... MR SHAFTSBURY! LOOK! THERE'S HIS CLOTHES IN THE ASH CAN ... SEE ?! ... I TOL' YA!
PETES DISTRIBUTION
PETES DISTRIBU

PETE'S DISTRIBUTION
WHA? YOU DID WHAT?! STUPID!
HONES' PETE... WAS NO OTHER WAY... WE HAD THAT STIFF ON OUR HAN'S ALL WEEK!
LIKE I TOL' YOU... LAS' WEEK... WHEN WE FIND THIS GUY SNOOPIN' AROUND OUR TRUCK-WE HIT HIM! ...SO, HE GOT DUMPED WIT' THE LOAD OF LUMBER WE DELIVERED TO LOMBARDI'S LUMBER YARD... ACCIDENTALLY!
SO, TONIGHT I GO BACK THERE AND GET THE STIFF... LEFT ALL HIS CLOTHES IN AN ASH CAN... THEN I DUMPED HIM NAKED IN THE RIVER.. THAT WAY THERE'S NO IDENTIFICATION!
SEE, PETE... NO PROBLEM... MAYBE HE WAS ONE OF IRISH EDDIE'S MOB... OR A FED... NO MATTER
OKAY, GINO... WE DON'T WANTA MAKE NO TROUBLE FOR LOMBARDI LUMBER... THEY DO A GOOD JOB SELLIN' OUR STUFF... IT'S ALL NICE AN' CLEAN... AN' I WANTA KEEP IT THAT WAY... OKAY?

'MORNING JACOB...I'M CURIOUS ABOUT WHERE YOU BUY YOUR LUMBER
FRIEDA... SHOW ELTON OUR ORDER BOOKS... AND CHECKS
HMM... WHO IS THIS PETE'S DISTRIBUTOR? WHY DO YOU PAY HIM IN CASH... NO INVOICES - IS HE A DEALER?
WE DON'T ASK! HE GIVES US CHEAP AND LONG TO PAY. WHATS WRONG?
I'LL TAKE HIS ADDRESS!
I DON'T KNOW... YET !!
SO, WHAT'S GOING ON?
ECH:! WHAT CAN IT BE?... NOTHING WITH NOTHING... COME, I'LL WALK YOU HOME
OFFICE
I ♪CASH♪ CLOTHES♪
JACOB... YOUR LIFE HERE IS JUST BUYING AND SELLING WOOD... FOR WHAT?
IT'S A GOOD LIVING, FRIEDA. WE'RE ALIVE AND WELL... ITS ENOUGH TO ASK!

I CASH CLOTHES
OH, THERE MUST BE MORE THAN JUST SURVIVING... LIKE INSECTS, JACOB!
DOES THE COCKROACH NEED A MEANING? IN GERMANY, NAZI ANIMALS ARE WIPING OUT THOUSANDS... WHY?... AND ME... I BUILD FOR YEARS AN ADDITION TO MY SHUL, ONLY TO HAVE SOMEONE ELSE'S NAME ON IT.. BECAUSE THEY NEED HIS MONEY ... SO WHERE IS A MEANING?
HOW BITTER! ME, I NEED A MEANING!
I CASH CLOTHES
BITTER? YOU THINK, MAYBE, I WOULDN'T LIKE A MEANING TOO?!
COME IN... SIT A WHILE... I'LL GIVE YOU A GLASS TEA... BE ONLY A MINUTE... I KNOW RIFKA WILL HAVE SUPPER WAITING HOME FOR YOU.
...AND RIFKA... HA... MARRIED 30 YEARS. WHERE'S THE MEANING?
BUT, THE CHILDREN?
AH! THE CHILDREN! MY SON, THE DOCTOR, MY DAUGHTER, THE TEACHER-BOTH ARE MARRYING OUT OF OUR RELIGION... SO, THAT'S THE END OF MY JEWISH FUTURE!! PEE-POO-PAH :, NOTHING :
HAVE A PIECE OF DANISH?
SLURP
ON THE OTHER HAND, MAYBE THERE IS SOMETHING YET..!! FRIEDA, WE'RE NOT SO OLD- WE CAN MAKE A NEW LIFE TOGETHER!
P-L-E-A-S-E ITS SIX O'CLOCK ALREADY! GO, JACOB GO!

NO...FRIEDA LISTEN TO WHAT I'M ASKING!
JACOB, I'VE HAD MARRIAGE! WHAT I'VE LIVED THROUGH HAS LEFT ME DEAD INSIDE...I WANT NOW TO HAVE PEACE AND SAFETY... I'M HERE IN AMERICA ...IT'S ENOUGH FOR ME NOW.
BESIDES, WHAT ABOUT RIFKA?
WHAT DO I HAVE WITH HER??... JUST EXISTING...DAY-TO-DAY!
JACOB, THIS IS TOO MUCH FOR ME ... GO!
HEY, MA... LOOK OUR KITTY JUST HAD BABIES

PONDEROSA
LUMBER MILLS
PONDEROSA
LUMBER MILLS
PONDEROSA
LUMBER MILLS
GOD!! THEY'RE HI-JACKERS!

SIXTH FLOOR
SMITH...I'VE GOT TALK TO YOU ABOUT LOMBARDI
SO DO I ELTON!
WE'VE SOLD ALL OUR STOCK IN LOMBARDI! THE MARKET SNAPPED IT UP AT $4.50 A SHARE...WE NETTED $400,000.!
HOW'S THEM APPLES, ELTON!
BUT LOMBARDI IS HEADED FOR SOME TROUBLE...THEIR SUPPLIER'S A CROOK
FORGET IT! NOW, IT'S THE STOCKHOLDERS' WORRY...WE HAVE OTHER FISH TO FRY
WHITE & SHAFTSBURY
YOUR COMMISSION IS $20,000... AND WE'RE MAKING YOU A PARTNER— SMITH, WHITE AND SHAFTSBURY HOW'S THAT..? EH, EH, EH ?
SEE ME IN THE MORNING - GOT A NEW ISSUE FOR YOU TO WORK!
SMITH WHITE & SHAFTSBURY
GOD... WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO LOMBARDI!
LIKE SMITH SAID... WHO CARES!?
'NIGHT ELTON
SMITH WHITE & SHAFTSBURY

ELTON !
YES, REBECCA ?
DO YOU STILL WANT TO MARRY ME?
YES, YES,
THEN WE MUST DO IT RIGHT AWAY,
BUT, YOUR PARENTS ...THEY WILL NEVER ACCEPT IT !
OH, BUT THEY WILL, NOW !!
I'M PREGNANT, ELTON !!
ELTON
ELTON ??
DO YOU STILL WANT ME?
YES, YES ... FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE... LETS GET MARRIED RIGHT AWAY!
108

CONCLUSION NEXT ISSUE

PRESERVING A SENSE OF WONDER...

COMICS & COMIX

FANTASY GAMES

T-SHIRTS

JAPANESE TOYS

ANIMATION

ALTERNATIVE COMIX

BUTTONS

NEW COMICS

SCIENCE FICTION

COLLECTABLES

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PALO ALTO
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SAN FRANCISCO
650 Irving 94122
415/665-5888

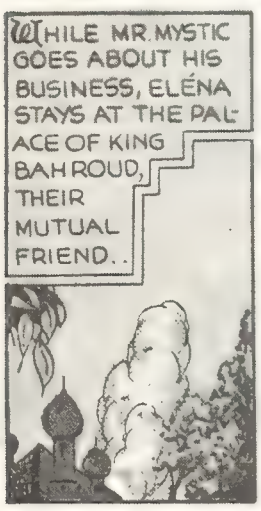
MR. MYSTIC

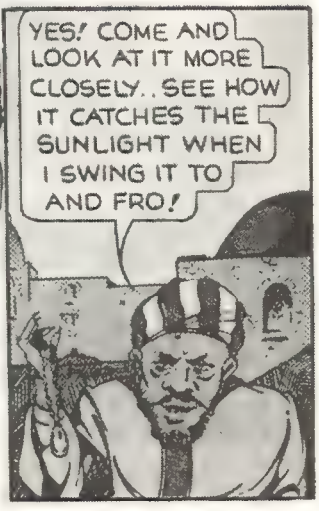
by W. MORGAN THOMAS

Distributed by Register and Tribune Syndicate

COMPLETELY VERSED IN THE SECRET ART OF MAGIC, MR. MYSTIC, A YOUNG AMERICAN, PLEDGES HIS LIFE TO COMBAT THE FORCES OF EVIL IN THE WORLD. . . . .

USING HIS POWERS, MR. MYSTIC BREAKS A WICKED SPELL HELD OVER ELÉNA, HIS FIANCEE, BY "CARDIN THE TERRIBLE". . . . .





LEADING THE GIRL BY THE HAND, CARDIN'S HENCHMAN TAKES HER DOWN A LONELY STREET... GRADUALLY THEY DISAPPEAR.

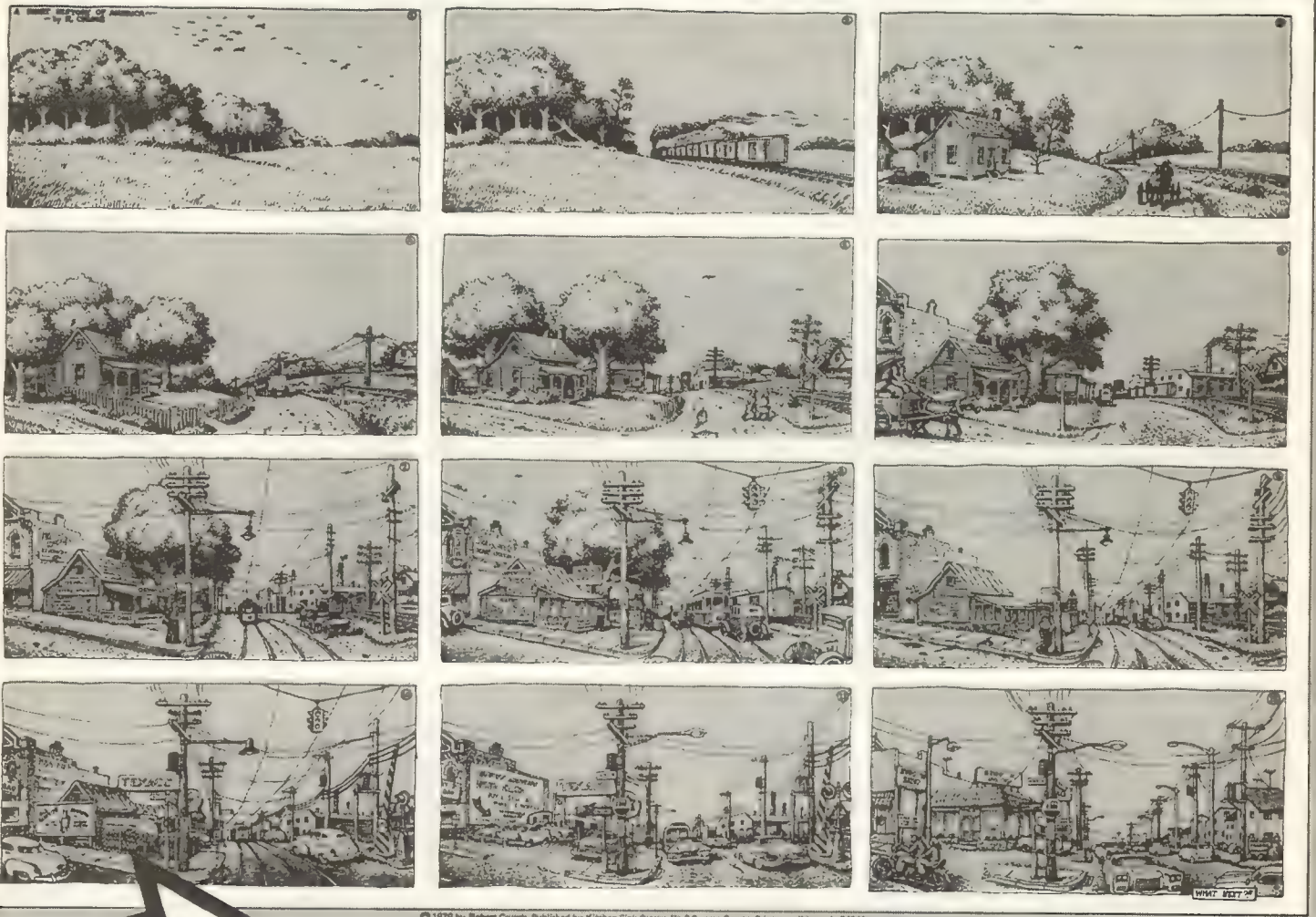
MEANWHILE IN A CITY HOTEL, MR. MYSTIC RESTLESSLY PACES THE FLOOR OF HIS ROOM..
MY HEAD IS SPLITTING! SOMEONE IS TRYING TO GET A THOUGHT THROUGH TO ME!
WHY? WHY? WHY CAN'T I GET IT?
CONCENTRATE! I MUST CONCENTRATE! WHO IS TRYING TO CONTACT ME BY TELEPATHY?
PRESENTLY CARDIN'S CASTLE APPEARS ON THE MIRROR, AND AS IT FADES, ELENA'S LOVELY HEAD APPEARS..
ELENA AT CARDIN'S DEN! I MUST SAVE HER!
IN THE BLEAK MOUNTAINS CLOSE BY, CARDIN'S ANCIENT CASTLE POINTS ITS TOWERS INTO THE SKY.....
A PITY THAT YOU ARE UNCONSCIOUS, ELENA! I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR SCREAMS WHEN LOBO STRETCHES THE RACK!
YOU HAVE DISOBEYED ME, ELENA! FOR THAT, YOU MUST PAY WITH YOUR LIFE!
AFTER YOU GET THROUGH, THROW HER BODY INTO THE FURNACE!
YES, MASTER!
WAIT!! SOMEONE'S COMING! MR. MYSTIC HASN'T WASTED ANY TIME IN GETTING HERE!
OUTSIDE, MR. MYSTIC PONDERS ON HOW TO MAKE AN ENTRANCE..
BEFORE HE CAN ACT, THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN BY ITSELF, AND A VOICE BECKONS HIM IN..

WELCOME, MR. MYSTIC, I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU! WON'T YOU SIT DOWN?
I'VE COME FOR ELENA, CARDIN. WHERE IS SHE?!!
ALL IN DUE TIME, MR. MYSTIC, BUT FIRST I INSIST YOU SIT DOWN! THERE!
ALL RIGHT, CARDIN, YOU'VE HAD YOUR FUN. NOW, GET TO THE POINT; WHERE IS SHE?
IMPATIENT FELLOW, AREN'T YOU? GO TO THE PANEL ON THE WALL BEFORE YOU, AND YOU'LL SEE HER!
WHAT HAS THAT FIEND UP HIS SLEEVE NOW?
ELENA!!! HE'S GOT ELENA ON THE RACK!! OH!
I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM SOMEHOW! I WON'T REST UNTIL ONE OF US IS DEAD!
AS MR MYSTIC IS ABOUT TO PROJECT HIMSELF INTO THE DUNGEON, ONE OF CARDIN'S HENCHMEN CLUBS HIM WITH A HEAVY CHAIN..
MASTER SAY WE TAKE HIM TO TORTURE CHAMBER! COME!

UNCONSCIOUS, MR MYSTIC IS THROWN INTO AN IRON CAGE AT ONE END OF THE EVIL-SMELLING ROOM.
HEH! HEH! THE FOOL! AS SOON AS YOU FINISH WITH HER, LOBO, GIVE HIM THE SAME THING!
WITH A SMUG GRIN OF ANTICIPATION, THE HUNCHBACK BEGINS TO TURN THE HANDLE OF THE RACK..
SUDDENLY OUT OF A BLINDING FLASH, THE IRON HANDLE ELONGATES.
IN A FLASH IT WRAPS ITSELF ABOUT THE MAN IN BINDING COILS.
HE'S COMPLETELY ENCASED.
VERY CLEVER, MR. MYSTIC, BUT YOU WON'T GET ME!
AS CARDIN RUNS AWAY, MR. MYSTIC GESTURES, AND THE IRON BARS MELT AWAY..
QUICKLY FREEING HIMSELF, MR. MYSTIC CHASES THE COWARDLY CARDIN..
WE SHALL SEE!
YOU'LL NEVER GET ME! NEVER!
I COMMAND THE STAIRS TO TURN INTO A SLIDE!

AT THE WAVE OF MR. MYSTIC'S ARM, THE STEPS FLATTEN OUT AND BECOME A SLIPPERY TOBOGGAN..
UNABLE TO MAINTAIN A HOLD ON THE STEEP INCLINE, CARDIN SLIDES DOWN TO THE FLOOR...
YOU ARE EVIL, CARDIN, AND YOU TRIED TO KILL ELENA!
"FOR THAT YOU DIE"! SHOUTS MR MYSTIC, AND CARDIN SCREAMS AS HE TURNS TO SAND.....
DUST TO DUST, CARDIN! YOU ARE WELL REPAID!
THANK HEAVEN! I GOT HERE IN TIME! SHE'S UNCONSCIOUS BUT UNHURT!
PICKING HER UP, MR. MYSTIC QUICKLY CARRIES ELENA OUT OF THE CASTLE..
OH! WHERE AM I??
IT'S ALL RIGHT, ELENA. CARDIN IS DEAD AND YOU NEED FEAR HIM NO MORE!
THANK HEAVEN! IF ONLY THE CASTLE WERE DESTROYED TOO!
NO SOONER SAID THAN DONE!
NOW, NOTHING CAN EVER TAKE ME AWAY FROM YOU AGAIN!
SOMETIMES I THINK I'M THE LUCKIEST MAN ON EARTH! NOW I KNOW I AM!
POWELL

R. CRUMB'S "A Short History of AMERICA" POSTER



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WHEN PARTNERS COLLIDE

or:

How Busy Arnold kept Will Eisner in a revolving door while editors demanded the head of The Spirit

What was it like to work in a comic book production "shop" during the Golden Age of the 1940s? Will Eisner's series of "Shop Talks" with fellow professionals may give us some idea, but short of being there, we can never know the day-to-day triumphs and tensions of producing comic books during the heyday of their national popularity.

In those days, before the advent of the editorial system used in today's larger comics publishing houses, individual editors (who usually doubled as writers, artists, or both) were also responsible for "packaging" their titles. This meant they had to supply corrected and camera-ready work to the publishers.

More important, it meant that all dealings with freelancers, both of a financial and artistic nature, were conducted through an intermediary.

After Will Eisner dissolved his partnership with Jerry Iger in 1939, he formed a relationship with Everett M. (Busy) Arnold, publisher of Quality Comics. Their agreement specified that Eisner act as the artist/editor/art director/packager on several Quality titles, including *Military (Blackhawk)* and *Uncle Sam Quarterly.* In addition, they were partners with *The Spirit* section, which Arnold marketed to newspapers through the Register and Tribune Syndicate.

Arnold, who himself packaged other Quality Comics in his Stamford, Connecticut office, kept in touch with Eisner's Tudor City, Manhattan, shop through frequent telephone calls, almost daily letters, and regular courier deliveries of artwork.

In cleaning out some of Will's old filing cabinets recently, i came across a thick stack of Eisner and Arnold correspondence dating from 1940 through early 1942, when Will was inducted into the Army.

Eisner kept carbons of all his own letters and clipped them to the originals he received from both Arnold and the editors at the Register and Tribune Syndicate. There were also notes, letters and cards from such Quality artists and writers as Bob Powell, Philip (Tex) Blaisdell, Audrey (Toni) Blum, Klaus Nordling and Dave Berg.

All in all, these documents, which are being donated by Will to the library collection at Ohio State University, supply today's fan with the nearest thing to a time travel ticket back to the behind-the-scenes activities of the Golden Age of Comics.

Busy Arnold is remembered by those who worked for and with him as an outspoken, critical perfectionist. His staff, which included artists Lou Fine, Jack Cole, Bob Powell and Eisner, is now considered by scholars and fans to have been one of the greatest assemblages of comic art talent in the history of the medium. But as far as Busy was concerned, the name of the game was getting those comics out on time and selling as many of them as possible.

"Busy's artistic standards were based on sales," Eisner says today. "He had fixed ideas in his mind about what he considered good art and good comics. If it sold, it was good; if not, it wasn't good. There was one common ground of understanding between us: we agreed that he knew damn little about art, but he was a heck of a salesman."

By Cat Yronwode

This photo of Will typing in his Tudor City studio in 1941 was posed by the newspaper photographer who took it. Will had a desk to type on, of course, and the carefully strewn proof pages and daily paper at his feet hint more of artifice than actuality.

Eisner says Arnold came to comics through another business. "His background had nothing to do with art. He was a printing press salesman. He sold some presses to Greater Buffalo Press and became involved with them somehow. They were printing all kinds of things, and that's where he found out about *Famous Funnies*. That's how he got involved in comics."

Arnold was, in fact, a vice president at Greater Buffalo when he decided to try publishing. His contacts with newspapers that used Greater Buffalo's resources to produce Sunday comic strip sections (rather than print them on their own presses) led to his relationships with the syndicates distributing the strips. That in turn led to Arnold's, Eisner's and the Register and Tribune Syndicate's development of *The Spirit* comic book as a newspaper insert.

"Aside from comics," Will says, "Busy's one claim to fame was that he was an alumnus of Brown University, and he would go out and recruit football players for the team. At one time he asked me if George Tuska was interested in playing football because George was a big, tough, husky guy.

"As far as Busy was concerned, he was dealing with a bunch of athletes. I was his star athlete. His idea of recruitment was to pay more than anyone else, and his idea of encouraging artists was to give them tough locker-room lectures about how lousy they were doing and how they had to go out and fight to win. That was his idea of the key to success in publishing."

Arnold was uncommonly vocal about his likes and dislikes. He not only criticised the work Eisner's shop employees produced, he had a lot to say about how *The Spirit* could be improved.

"Whenever anyone complained about *The Spirit*," Will explains, "Busy took the brunt of the criticism and then he passed it along to me. It was his idea to 'shake Bill up,' as he put it. He was like the fight

manager and I was his boxer, his creature. That's what it was like."

Today we think of *The Spirit* as an innovative series. It garners great praise for Will's introduction of colloquial speech, human interest stories, and emotionally honest characters to the often-stilted conventionality of comics. Eisner's stunning splash pages are held in high regard, and his use of unexpected slapstick and seemingly supernatural incidents add to the variety of the feature, removing it from the realm of boring super-heroics. All of this is taken for granted now, from the perspective of decades, but at the time it met with strenuous resistance on the part of many newspaper editors.

"They didn't understand what I was doing," Eisner says. "They had no idea of the power of the medium of comics. They wanted a circulation booster, something novel, yet very acceptable to the average reader. Or rather, *their* idea of who the average reader was. Their real idea was to anger as few readers as possible. That meant I had less freedom in the newspaper comic than I was used to in comic books. The rules of that ball game were totally different."

Busy Arnold, who was the intermediary between Eisner and the syndicate, invariably backed the newspaper editors, with the result that some of Will's best-known and most critically acclaimed pre-war stories were the focus of devastating attacks.

The file of letters between Eisner and Arnold begins abruptly on September 13, 1940, smack in the middle of the first of these controversies and attacks.

The *Minneapolis Star Journal* sponsored a Sunday radio feature in which "Uncle Ray" read the Sunday *Star Journal* funnies aloud. Joyce Swan of the newspaper sent the following note to the Register and Tribune Syndicate:

"George Grim had a couple of mothers call him at the station Sunday morning and object violently to the ape episode of our comic book ["Orang the Ape-Man," Sept. 1, 1940, reprinted in *Spirit* Bag 2]. They didn't like the idea of apes abducting and living with women. . .The ape episode was a little raw. . ."

Henry Martin, a salesman for the syndicate who Eisner describes as "a midwestern banker type, very low key, very cool, very forthright and pleasant," forwarded Swan's note to Arnold, adding, "I questioned the ape episode a little myself when I looked it over. . ."

Arnold sent the letters to Eisner with a blunt, hand-written message scrawled at the bottom:

"I think it will be well to leave out anything hideous in the future. Some editor might use it as an excuse to cancel."

The complaints didn't stop, however. On October 12, 1940, Philip H. Love, associate Sunday editor of the *Washington Star*, submitted a two-page letter of complaint about *The Spirit* directly to Arnold's office. Love wrote, in part:

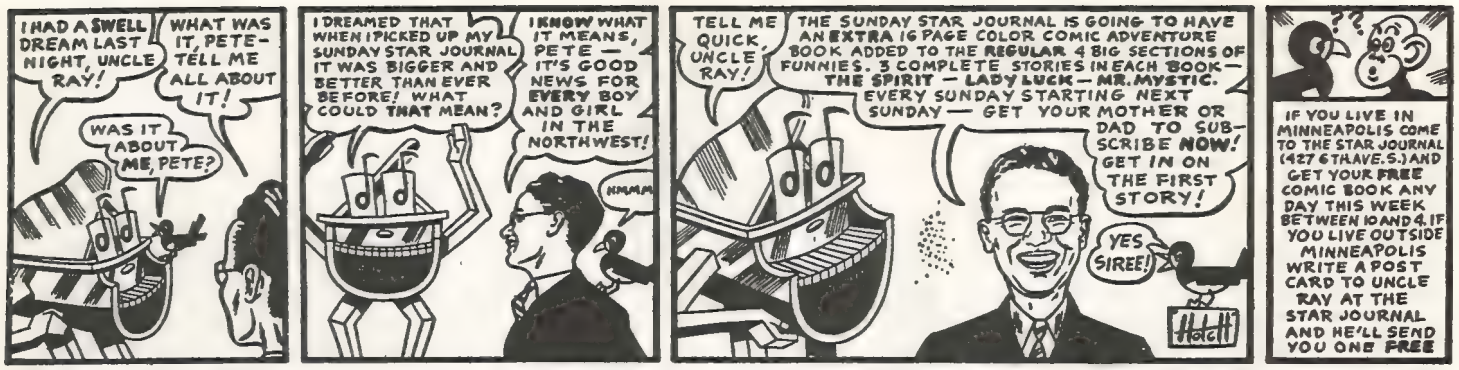
THUS, AT DOLAN'S HOME THAT NIGHT...ELLEN ARRIVES.
OH..HELLO..I'M MR. DOLAN'S DAUGHTER, ELLEN. ARE YOU WAITING FOR DADDY?
YES.
WHY?
HE WENT TO HEADQUARTERS TO SEE IF HE CAN FIND A LAW ON WHICH TO ARREST ME!
...YOU SEE, I HAPPEN TO BE UNLUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE BEEN THE EXPERIMENT OF A FIENDISH SCIENTIST!
AN APE!
EEEK!
THE GIRL'S SHRIEK AWAKENS THE SAVAGE IN HIS MIND..HE LIFTS THE UNCONSCIOUS FORM IN HIS ARMS.
I'M GOING BACK WHERE I BELONG! I'M GOING BACK TO THE JUNGLE, AND I'LL TAKE A MATE WITH ME! THERE, PERHAPS I WILL NOT BE SHUNNED AS A MONSTER!
SEVERAL HOURS LATER, IN THE SPIRIT'S LABORATORY BENEATH WILDWOOD CEMETERY.
NEWS FLASH! DAUGHTER OF POLICE COMMISSIONER DOLAN REPORTED MISSING!
CLICK
COMMISSIONER DOLAN IS COMIN', MIST' SPIRIT!
A MOMENT LATER, DOLAN BURSTS INTO THE SPIRIT'S HOME.
SPIRIT!
TAKE IT EASY, DOLAN, AND TELL ME THE FACTS!
..IT'S THE TALKING APE! HE SEEMED SO HUMAN THAT I LEFT HIM IN MY HOME FOR AWHILE..WHEN I RETURNED, HE WAS GONE..AND CARRIED OFF ELLEN WITH HIM!
IS DAT DE SAME APE YO' WAS TELLIN' ME ABOUT, BOSS?
YOU MUST HELP ME! I'M TIED UP BY REGULATIONS, BUT YOU..AS THE SPIRIT CAN FOLLOW 'EM ALL OVER THE EARTH IF NECESSARY!
GET ME PASSAGE TO SUMATRA..HIS TYPE OF APE IS FOUND ONLY IN THAT REGION. EBONY, FILL MY AUTOPLANE WITH EXTRA GASOLINE!
YASSUH

Page 4 from the September 8, 1940 *Spirit* section which some syndicate customers found objectionable. This two-part story will be reprinted in full color in *Will Eisner's Quarterly*, beginning with issue No.8.

"The incident involving the ape seemed to me to skate on rather thin ice. And more risky still, I think, was the use of what purported to be the front page of a newspaper. [This refers to the splash page of October 14, 1940, which was designed with a mock headline blaring 'The Spirit! Who Is He?' It is today considered one of Eisner's finest early uses of the splash page as an artistic element in the development of mood and setting]. Although it is clearly stated that the paper was '*The Daily Press*,' there was, it seemed to me, some chance that less intelligent readers might think the various statements were being made by the editor of *The Star*.

"In the issue of October 27 ['Conscription Bill Signed' reprinted in *Spirit* Bag 3]. . .I see no purpose in having the recruiting sergeant assume such a tough attitude and talk with 'yers' and 'gits.' If the incident were humorous, it would be purposeful; but it is anything but humorous and, in times like these, nothing is gained by placing members of the armed services in an unfavorable light. . ."

On October 24, 1940, Love received another batch of material for upcoming episodes and again wrote a letter of complaint to Busy Arnold. He argued that there were things in *The Spirit* which were "out of line with *The Star's* policy. . .And that policy, briefly stated, is to keep *The Star*, at all times, a paper which no one need ever feel any misgivings about carrying home."


I HAD A SWELL DREAM LAST NIGHT, UNCLE RAY!
WHAT WAS IT, PETE — TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT!
WAS IT ABOUT ME, PETE?
I DREAMED THAT WHEN I PICKED UP MY SUNDAY STAR JOURNAL IT WAS BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE! WHAT COULD THAT MEAN?
I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS, PETE — IT'S GOOD NEWS FOR EVERY BOY AND GIRL IN THE NORTHWEST!
HMMM
TELL ME QUICK, UNCLE RAY!
THE SUNDAY STAR JOURNAL IS GOING TO HAVE AN EXTRA 16 PAGE COLOR COMIC ADVENTURE BOOK ADDED TO THE REGULAR 4 BIG SECTIONS OF FUNNIES. 3 COMPLETE STORIES IN EACH BOOK — THE SPIRIT — LADY LUCK — MR. MYSTIC. EVERY SUNDAY STARTING NEXT SUNDAY — GET YOUR MOTHER OR DAD TO SUBSCRIBE NOW! GET IN ON THE FIRST STORY!
YES SIREE!
Hotch
IF YOU LIVE IN MINNEAPOLIS COME TO THE STAR JOURNAL (427 6TH AVE. S.) AND GET YOUR FREE COMIC BOOK ANY DAY THIS WEEK BETWEEN 10 AND 4. IF YOU LIVE OUTSIDE MINNEAPOLIS WRITE A POST CARD TO UNCLE RAY AT THE STAR JOURNAL AND HE'LL SEND YOU ONE FREE

The Minneapolis Star Journal's promotion included these comic strips drawn by a local artist. Apparently, the artist had not seen 'The Spirit,' as he or she drew him with a cape and top hat. *The Star Journal* also gave *Spirit* sections away as part of their promotion campaign.

This time Love's anger was aroused by the November 3, 1940 story, "The Manly Art of Self-Defense," in which *The Spirit* socks Ellen Dolan on the jaw. "What we have," Love wrote, "is the hero committing an act which may give young readers the idea that it's quite all right to sock women and girls."

Love also took exception to Bob Powell's *Mr. Mystic* story for that week, which, he wrote, "could have been just as effective without the 'pool of blood' angle."

Busy Arnold mailed a profound apology to the outraged Mr. Love the next day. Arnold claimed that Ed Cronin, a Quality Comics Group editor, "is now spending about one-half of his time in checking on the contents of the weekly [*Spirit*] comic book. Mr. Martin has given [Cronin] instructions to kill anything which appears to be improper, obscene, in bad taste, etc."

Scribbled at the bottom of a cover letter sent to Eisner, along with the above correspondence, Arnold expressed his true opinions:

"Take my letter to Love with a 'grain of salt.' I thought that if we could make it appear that Henry Martin was helping out on our policy, it might shut them up."

Promotion for the weekly comic book was handled by the syndicate, but in at least one instance, the *Minneapolis Star Journal* took matters into its own hands by giving away free *Spirit* sections to children who requested them. The feature had begun there on August 4, 1940, but no one thought to send a copy of the locally produced promo material to Eisner or Arnold until the end of the year. These strips seem to have been part of a daily promotion for the "Uncle Ray" Sunday funnies show on radio.

The otherwise unknown staff artist signed "Hotch" apparently did not know what *The Spirit's* costume looked like, for he or she drew him in the costume of *The Phantom Detective*, a popular pulp magazine hero of the 1930s.

The year closed with picky Mr. Love of the *Washington Star* protesting the use of Portugal as a locale for the *Mr. Mystic* episode of January 12, 1941.

"I fear that Portuguese readers will squawk that *Mr. Mystic* shows the people of Portugal in an unfavorable light," he wrote. He also warned Arnold against allowing Eisner to use the word "Herr" in any strip "which was intended to cast aspersions on Germans." This came despite the fact that Eisner had yet to show signs of casting aspersions on Germans, or on any other nationality.

Arnold placated Love with a promise that "I will be more careful as to the locale which is used in each issue. Whenever any criticism can be inferred by some readers, we will not mention any definite country or place. Also, we will not make our villains obviously German"

Meanwhile, things were also moving along in the realm of the newsstand comic books Eisner was producing for Quality. On October 1, 1940, Arnold sent Eisner a critique of Lou Fine's artwork on *The Ray* and the *Black Condor*, which he found wanting. The writing also was not up to his standards.

These two features are considered by many today to be among the most beautiful examples of Golden Age art. The comics they appeared in command high prices and are singled out in *Overstreet* for Lou Fine's contributions. But to Busy Arnold, all that mattered was Lou Fine's omission of certain costume details, and the fact that in Eisner's origin script, the *Black Condor* had been portrayed an Englishman.

"I don't believe he should be British," Arnold wrote. "You should naturally assume that he is an American." Continuity be damned—it was a matter of patriotism!

A special attached note to Fine, accompanied by tearsheets from the comics, indicated that Fine had changed *The Ray's* costume from issue to issue ("Have *The Ray* always use the peaked blade on his headpiece. . .also put stars around neck, separation lines on wrists and slippers"). Arnold mentioned that overworked Ed Cronin had to spend time fixing these errors on Lou's part.

Reading through the Quality shop correspondence can lead to the confirmation of script and art credits which may not have appeared in the original comics, or which may have appeared under pseudonyms. For instance, on January 23, 1941, Busy Arnold wrote a letter to artist Mart Bailey, of which a copy was sent to Eisner. In passing, Arnold mentioned that "Bill Eisner did both the artwork and stories for the first two episodes of *Uncle Sam*" but that he had to stop his direct involvement with the feature when he began work on *The Spirit*.

"He had to turn *Uncle Sam* over to another artist," wrote Arnold, but the implication is that, for a while at least, Eisner

GULP! MR. SPIRIT — I WISH YOU WOULDN'T APPEAR SO SUDDENLY! I'M NERVOUS!
DOUBLE GULP!
SORRY, PETE, BUT I NEED SOME MORE FREE COMIC BOOKS! GOT PLENTY?
I'LL SAY WE HAVE — ENOUGH FOR EVERY BOY AND GIRL IN THE NORTHWEST!
WHATA MAN!
Hotch
THEY'RE SWELL BOOKS — TELL THE BOYS AND GIRLS HOW THEY CAN GET THEM, MR. SPIRIT!
IF YOU LIVE IN MINNEAPOLIS, COME TO THE STAR JOURNAL (427 6TH AVE. S.) AND I'LL GIVE YOU ONE PERSONALLY — THEY'RE FREE! IF YOU LIVE OUTSIDE MINNEAPOLIS, WRITE UNCLE RAY AT THE STAR JOURNAL AND HE'LL SEND YOU ONE FREE! SEND A POSTCARD NOW!
THANKS PETE!
JUST A STUMBLE BUM EH — PETE!
YOU'RE WELCOME!
STARTING NEXT SUNDAY THE SUNDAY STAR JOURNAL WILL HAVE AN EXTRA 16 PAGE COMIC BOOK WITH NEW ADVENTURES ADDED TO THE REGULAR COMIC SECTION

still scripted the series. The letter to Bailey is a naked attempt to lure Bailey away from his publisher and come over to Quality. It ends with a curious little post script:

"If for any reason you do not want Big Shot Comics to know you are seeing me, I will keep our meeting confidential."

In addition to confirming that Bailey was working for Big Shot in January, 1941, the note indicates the kind of behind-the-scenes dealings publishers engaged in when they tried to "raid" each other's shops. The same sort of shenanigans go on today in the industry, but few publishers now commit their indiscretions to paper!

Mart Bailey, by the way, was not swayed by Busy's promises of big bucks and national recognition for drawing *Uncle Sam*. He stayed with Big Shot Comics.

Over at the Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1941 saw the continuation of the previous year's complaints about Eisner's innovations in comic art and story.

On January 3, Henry Martin wrote to Busy that the series "should get along with less murders," and hoped for "plenty of action without too much blood.

"Bill Eisner does a very good job of drawing with certain faces," Martin noted, "but the result is rather appalling to mothers of young children." He asked Arnold to "tell Bill to do just as good drawing on such faces, but leave out anything that will keep the kids awake at night." A tall order!

Philip H. Love of the *Washington Star* got back into action on February 21, 1941, calling the March 9 episode ["Toy Planes," reprinted in *Spirit* Bag 4] "objectionable on two counts:

"1) It makes U.S. military officials look like conceited and stupid asses.

"2)The use of 'ya' [for the German 'ja'] combined with the name 'Max', makes the nationality of the invaders all too plain.

"In times like these, anything that indicates smugness or dumbness on the part of defense officials seems to me to be out of order in a comic strip. And, although we are virtually at war with Germany, we have not reached the point, thank heaven, where we have to use comics for propaganda purposes.

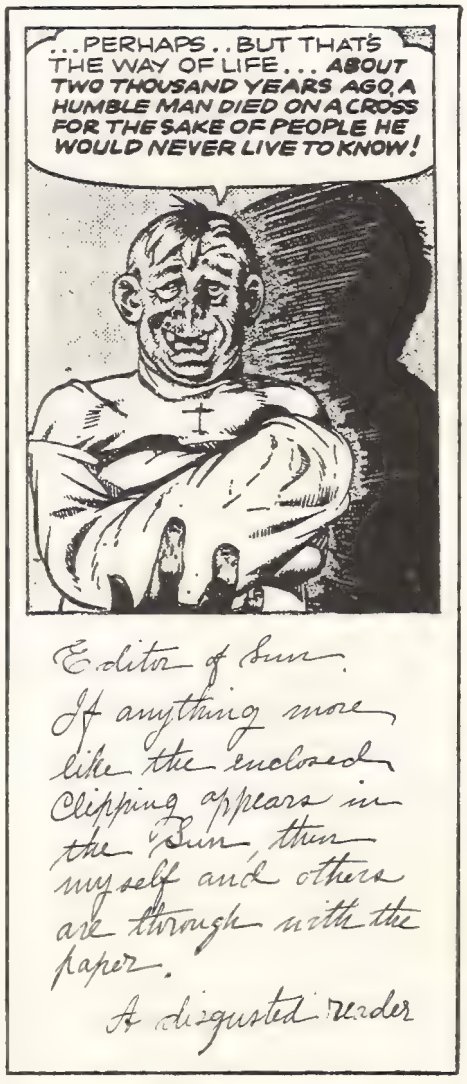
"Is it possible to chisel out the 'ya'?"

In his by now standard apology to Love, Busy said he would "caution Mr. Eisner to be very careful" about future depictions of defense officials, and promised to personally oversee the routing out of the offensive "ya" at the printing plant. In fact, he simply had it roughed up so as to be partially illegible, but Love seems to have been satisfied, for he did not comment on it again.

Surprisingly, the February 23, 1941 issue of *The Spirit* ["Invasion from Argos," reprinted in *Police Comics* 40] did not offend the easily incensed Mr Love—although it probably should have. This is the story in which an invasion of extraterrestials threatens world security. Sam Smith, the only man aware of the menace, is too frightened to do anything about it until he is thrown into confinement where a strait-jacketed lunatic inspires him to action by reminding him of Jesus Christ's sacrifices for the sake of truth.

The sight of a grotesque madman invoking the Christian saviour was probably intended with slight irony by the Jewish Eisner. However, "A disgusted reader" of Baltimore, Maryland took it rather seriously, writing to the paper and provoking a fallout of worried correspondence from the syndicate to Busy Arnold.

"We have always to watch out for such things as this, which has reference to a sacred figure," wrote H. Lowrey Cooling, Sunday editor of the *Baltimore Sun*. "It apparently is impossible to refer to the Deity even indirectly without giving offense to someone."


...PERHAPS..BUT THAT'S THE WAY OF LIFE... ABOUT TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, A HUMBLE MAN DIED ON A CROSS FOR THE SAKE OF PEOPLE HE WOULD NEVER LIVE TO KNOW!
Editor of Sun.
If anything more like the enclosed clipping appears in the Sun, then myself and others are through with the paper.
A disgusted reader

Once again apologies were tendered and the series proceeded as before. In mid-March, complaints began to center around *Mr. Mystic*. Chuck Lounsbury, managing editor of the syndicate, bypassed Arnold and wrote directly to Eisner.

"The appearance of the skeleton. . .on page one was really a bit too hideous for newspaper consumption. Likewise, the tone of the balloons was grim reading and written a bit too maturely for childish minds." So much for the idea that adults could enjoy comics in 1941.

Lounsbury went on to explain that his complaints were offered "in the spirit of friendly suggestion" and warned that "it would be wise to tone down the . . .morbid drawings [because] there is. . .quite a growing antipathy around this country to the comic magazines." This was well before Dr. Wertham's anti-comics crusade, of course, but apparently the seeds of public disapproval had been sown almost from the first time a comic book hit the stands.

As far as Busy Arnold was concerned, the biggest problem in the weekly comic wasn't *The Spirit* or *Mr. Mystic*, but rather, *Lady Luck*, a feature he seems to have disliked intensely, no matter who was writing or drawing it at any given time. On April 2, 1941, he wrote to Will that "Nick [Viscardi]'s artwork on the last two or three episodes of *Lady Luck* has been pretty thin. . .It hasn't been of newspaper caliber. . .the last few installments have had a lot of faked far shots but no closeups and the result. . .has been pretty awful."

He didn't confine his complaints to the art, however: "The worst feature of the recent installments. . .has been the very bad stories. . . They are so confusing that no one in the office here could understand them. Don't you think it might be well to take Miss Blum off this job and give it to a better writer?"

Aside from Arnold's low opinion of Toni Blum's scripting, this passage is important for being the first record that Blum ever even wrote the feature. Previous scripters credited have included only Eisner (issue 1), Viscardi, Dick French, and much later, Klaus Nordling and Fred Schwab. That Toni Blum wrote *Lady Luck* episodes drawn by Nick Viscardi was previously unknown.

On April 21, 1941, Arnold wrote to ask Eisner for advance scripts on the "Archie Atkins" feature "Alexander Koda" was to draw for the comic books. [There is no "Alexander Koda" listed in Jerry Bails' *Who's Who of American Comic Books;* Arnold, who frequently made errors in naming artists he was not personally acquainted with, probably meant Alexander Kotzky, a Quality freelancer at the time]. "Since he is rather slow. . .I would like to start him on the third installment. . .just as soon as he completes set number two."

Arnold reported to Eisner on May 12, 1941 that Toledo was getting ready to pick up the *Spirit* section that next Sunday. He added that Henry Martin of the syndicate hoped Arnold would "continue to emphasize to Bill Eisner that we can get plenty of action and drama without any gruesome figures that will draw down the wrath of the Toledo women's clubs on the heads of the *Times*.' "

May 22, 1941 saw yet another Love letter winging its way to Arnold. Before sending it along to Will, Busy scribbled a note

ON THE CLIFF BELOW...
AIM X3 AT THE NORTH FACTORY!
AT G-2 ...HEADQUARTERS FOR MILITARY INFORMATION..
WELL, SPIRIT, I'M GLAD YOU CAME... WON'T BE NEEDING YOUR SERVICES ON THAT SABOTAGE BUSINESS...
BUT..I.. ..WHY?..
BECAUSE SEVERAL PLANES OF FOREIGN DESIGN HAVE BEEN FOUND NEAR RIVERVILLE..AND DO YOU KNOW... THEY WERE ROBOT PLANES! ...YES SIR, SOMETHING MUST HAVE GONE WRONG WITH THE MECHANISM BECAUSE THEY BLEW UP IN MID-AIR...
NO! REALLY??
YES..WHY, DO YOU REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THAT..AN ATTEMPT WAS ACTUALLY MADE TO INVADE US BY ROBOT BOMBING PLANES! WHEN I THINK OF IT I SHUDDER!
The Spirit
YOU'LL NEVER MAKE US TALK.. BUT I'LL TELL YOU THIS, AMERICAN..YOUR COUNTRY IS STUPID TO MEDDLE IN THE AFFAIRS OF EUROPE... THEY ARE SMUG, THINKING THAT 3000 MILES OF WATER CAN PROTECT THEM.. BUT AS YOU SAW TONIGHT, THOSE PLANES CAME FROM MY COUNTRY AND THEY WILL CONTINUE TO COME ACROSS, UNTIL EVERY FACTORY IS SMASHED
BUT THAT'S WHAT I CAME TO TELL YOU ABOUT... YOU SEE... I...
TUT..TUT.. NO APOLOGIES NOW, SPIRIT... YOU MAY BE AN OUTLAW OR SOME SUCH, BUT YOU'VE HELPED US IN THE PAST...AND JUST BECAUSE THIS TIME WE'VE BEATEN YOU TO A SOLUTION.. WELL, THAT'S NO REASON FOR ME TO BE UNGRATEFUL..
THANKS! THAT'S NICE OF YOU
NOT AT ALL, MY BOY, NOT AT ALL.. GOOD DAY... WHEN WE NEED YOU AGAIN, I'LL GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU...
SLAM

The excerpts above are from "Toy Planes" (3/9/41), an episode which infuriated chronic complainer Philip H. Love of the *Washington Star*. The upper left panel shows the voice balloon containing the expression "Ya!" which Busy Arnold had obscured in order to placate Love.

at the top:

"Bill—this is the latest howl from Love. We'll answer it Monday."

Love's "howl" was a panel-by-panel critique of the June 8, 1941 *Spirit* ("Five Passengers in Search of an Author," starring Silk Satin). Calling the story "the worst yet," Love wrote that "Eisner is a good draftsman, but some of his ideas are beyond all understanding." Unable to follow Will's storytelling through the tricky spy-versus-spy sequences set aboard an airplane, Love blamed Eisner for what he perceived as errors in continuity.

"But worse still—terrible, in fact—is the last panel (page 8) in which the teacher says '. . .I'm going to talk to your parents about the wild comic books you've been reading.'

"There is a group of readers who think the newspapers have sunk pretty low to print comic books. In fact, there is a growing movement in opposition to such reading matter. We have felt that our comic book was all right, provided we could keep it within reasonable bounds. I suppose Mr. Eisner either thought he was defending the books or else taking a sly poke at the people who oppose them. Regardless of his thought in the matter, however, his panel will be regarded by many as a tacit admission that there is some justification to the opposition to such books. At the least, it may be construed as a public recognition of the fact that there is opposition."

This time Love was so upset he didn't wait for Arnold's response, but took matters into his own hands:

"I 'phoned Buffalo [Greater Buffalo Press, where the comics were printed] to get the word 'comic' chiseled off the plate, but the issue was already on the press—in fact, there were only 16,000 copies yet to be printed. I learned then that we do not receive the advance proofs until Monday, the very day on which the book goes to press. I don't see what protection such a system gives us, and I think it's about time you were working out some better way."

Whatever Arnold thought of Love's presumption in trying to go around the syndicate and personally censor the entire press run, he did not send a carbon of his reply to Eisner.

On June 4, 1941, Love's superior, B. M. McKelway, managing editor of the *Washington Star*, added his two cents' worth to the controversy. He "did not like the *Spirit* release for June 1." This was Will's "Killer McNobby" episode, written entirely in doggerel rhyme and hand lettered in a calligraphic style by Sam Rosen. (The story is reprinted in Kitchen Sink *Spirit* no. 34). "I thought it was typographically atrocious," McKelway said. "While the discriminating reader might note the burlesque, we can't put our faith on discriminating readers."

The next paragraph continued in the same vein:

"I have [also] read the release for June 22. I didn't like that either."

The June 22, 1941 episode was the famous "Hitler Story," more precisely titled "The Tale of the Dictator's Reform" (subject of praise by Jules Feiffer in *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, reprinted in Kitchen Sink *Spirit* no. 32, and highly recommended by this author). In keeping with Love's earlier admonitions to avoid any semblance of premature anti-fascism, McKelway warned strongly about the "trouble" which would arise from using comics for "propaganda." "It doesn't make any difference whether we happen to agree with this propaganda or not," he wrote. "Suppose we

Next four pages: excerpts from the Hitler and 'Killer McNobby' stories. Objecting editors failed to mention that 'Killer' looks like Josef Stalin.

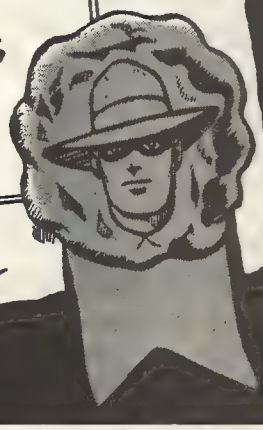
COMIC BOOK SECTION

Killer McNobby

ACTION Mystery ADVENTURE

THE Spirit

Harken dear readers, oh lend us your ear ...
List' to the tale of the man without fear ...
Killer McNobby was his horrible name ...
A terrible man of notorious fame ...
Death was his business ...he dispensed it with ease –
He'd murder a man as quick as you please
Maiming and gouging was merely his hobby
Ah yes... a terrible man was Killer McNobby!!



BY Will Eisner

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JUNE 1, 1941

They jabbed and they hit ...
They slugged and they kicked!
Chorus
No tricks were barred ...
As they rolled 'round the yard!
The Spirit knew no fear ... To McNobby life was dear!
The Spirit slammed and slammed ...
The Killer hooked and whammed!
Left right, left right... The Spirit's fists were dynamite!

MEANWHILE OUR WEARY DISILLUSIONED LITTLE DICTATOR WANDERS TO WILDWOOD CEMETERY.. THERE, TIRED AND FORLORN HE FALLS ASLEEP 'NEATH A TOMBSTONE...
WHEN HE AWAKENS A HALF HOUR LATER, HE FINDS HIMSELF DEEP UNDERGROUND .. THE SPIRIT BENDING OVER HIM...
WHO??... WHO ARE YOU??
I'M THE SPIRIT.. YOU ARE IN MY SECRET HIDEAWAY.. I KNOW WHO YOU ARE... PAPERS IN YOUR WALLET....
...YOU ARE LUCKY THAT YOU WEREN'T SEEN.. SAY, YOU'RE PRETTY SHORT!! IN THE NEWSPAPER PHOTOS YOU ALWAYS APPEAR TALLER!!
WHY IS THIS A SECRET PLACE?!...AND WHY DO YOU CALL YOURSELF THE SPIRIT?!
..TO HIDE MY REAL IDENTITY...Y'SEE A LONG TIME AGO I WAS FOUND IN A COMA...BELIEVING ME DEAD, THEY BURIED ME ...HOWEVER, 24 HOURS LATER I AWOKE AND BROKE OUT OF MY GRAVE... I THEN REALIZED THAT I WAS OFFICIALLY DEAD.. SO I BECAME THE SPIRIT AND I'M DEVOTING MY "SECOND" LIFE TO FIGHTING CRIME BEYOND THE REACH OF THE LAW.....
AH.. I SEE.. THE SPIRIT, A DEAD MAN... ER..THAT IS.. OFFICIALLY....
...HERE IN THE VERY PLACE I WAS BURIED I'VE BUILT MY HOME AND A COMPLETE CRIME LABORATORY!
CLEVER.. HA! YOU WOULD MAKE A GOOD MEMBER OF MY SECRET POLICE!!
NO!...I SAID I FIGHT CRIME..NOT SPY AND BETRAY!!
CAREFUL HOW YOU TALK TO ME!!! I AM THE LEADER.. THE CONQUEROR.. IT IS AN HONOR TO SERVE ME!!!
WHY YOU EGO MANIAC!! YOU ARE THE WORLD'S MOST HATED MAN!!
6-22
NO.. NO!! THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY ADMIRE ME... I WILL GO OUT TO THEM NOW... STAND ASIDE!!
FLASH... THIS IS A SPECIAL BULLETIN... IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE POLICE ARE CHECKING A SPREADING RUMOR THAT A WELL KNOWN DICTATOR IS RIGHT HERE IN AMERICA.... LYNCHING PARTIES OF CITIZENS ARE FORMING DOWNTOWN...
?
5.

WELL!! ... YOU DO NOT ANSWER?!! WHY DO YOU NOT APPLAUD ....?? YOU ... MY MINISTER OF PROPAGANDA ... SPEAK!!
YOU'RE A FOOL!! A STUPID FOOL!! DO YOU THINK THAT YOU CAN STOP THE GREAT MACHINE YOU HAVE BUILT?? DO YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN HALT THE GREATEST FORCE OF DESTRUCTION THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN??!!
HOW DARE YOU SPEAK TO ME THIS WAY!!! I AM...
PAH... YOU HAVE BECOME BUT A PAWN... A TOOL OF THE MEN BEHIND YOU... WITHOUT THE SECRET POLICE.. A MIGHTY ARMY AND OUR BRAINS YOU ARE NOTHING ...YOU NEED US ... WE DO NOT NEED YOU !!!
NO!
BANG
BANG
BRING IN THE "DOUBLE"...
YES EXCELLENCY...
YOU ARE PROMOTED!! FROM NOW ON YOU ARE THE SUPREME LEADER OF THE MASTER RACE!! ..BUT...
REMEMBER.. WE ARE MASTERS HERE!!... NOT YOU!!
NOW GO OUT ON THE BALCONY AND MAKE THAT SPEECH WE REHEARSED!
6-22
AND.. OH YES...SERGEANT ..CREMATE HIM, AND SCATTER HIS ASHES ... HE NEVER EXISTED!!
next morning in U.S.A.
WELL, MIST' SPIRIT, BOSS. JES' GOES TO SHOW..YA. CAN'T TRUST A DICTATOR!!
DICTATOR WARNS THAT ENTIRE EARTH WILL BE UNDER HIS RULE SOON.

Another promotional picture posed by the same newspaper photographer in late 1941. The idea behind it was to capitalize on the fact that Will received fan mail from prominent experts in the field of jurisprudence, such as Judge Musmanno, mentioned in the text.

didn't?"

McKelway reiterated Love's previous objections about the June 8 episode's facetious mention of comic books. "I thought that the editors. . .showed deplorable taste and judgment. . .aren't we going out of our way to ask for trouble?"

The letter ended with a tacit threat to drop the feature if Eisner didn't toe the mark. "I am deeply perturbed over the possibility of losing what seems to me a potentially valuable part of the Sunday paper. . ." The message was loud and clear: keep it childish, simple and clean or we'll pull out.

Love returned to gloat a little with a letter dated June 11, in which he explained that "*The Spirit* for June 22 was so bad, I was obliged to bring it to the attention of the managing editor. He felt as strongly about it as I did and—well, you've probably heard from him by now.

"I find no serious flaws in the June 29 proofs." (One can imagine the sighs of relief in Eisner's and Arnold's offices.) "I do feel, however," (uh-oh) "that the use of Old English lettering in *Mr. Mystic* is to be avoided."

The story Love found "no serious flaws in" was "The Balkan Ball," a bland situation comedy which has to date never been reprinted. Mr. Love was quite a judge of what is enduring and classic in comic art.

He closed with yet another plea for German-American unity: "I think that names that suggest nationality—such as 'Kurt' in the June 29 *Lady Luck*—are to be avoided when treating such subjects as espionage."

So assiduously did Love and McKelway object to every mention of the raging war in Europe—a war which had already engulfed most of the continent in fascism and which threatened the entire world—that one might think either they or their newspaper maintained a covert pro-Nazi stance. This was not necessarily so, as many newspapers of the period tried to tone down the prospect of the coming war with Germany, hoping it would not happen. Their isolationism was partially responsible for the nation's great shock when Pearl Harbor was bombed by Japan in December of 1941. The country's unpreparedness for fascist aggression could not be faulted to the likes of Will Eisner, who called it like he saw it in 1941.

There were some who, unlike "Disgusted Reader" in Baltimore, did appreciate Will's attempts to inject the comic book medium with mature vision. One of these fans was Judge M.A. Musmanno of the Court of Common Pleas in Pittsburgh, who wrote to compliment Eisner on the June 22 "Hitler Story." Will's brief reply to Musmanno mentioned that he found the judge's letter "very encouraging."

Will certainly needed encouragement at the time, for not only was he under con-

Everett M. "Busy" Arnold in October 1941. This is a detail from a larger (and amusing) photo which can be seen in its entirety in *The Art of Will Eisner.*

stant fire from conservative newspaper editors, his draft board had come calling. They evidently knew something about German-American relationships which Love and McKelway were not privy to.

Chuck Lounsbury of the syndicate responded to Eisner's plea for an affidavit swearing that he could not be spared for Army service. Lounsbury's sworn statement explains that "in excess of 2,400,000 copies of the *Spirit*" were distributed each week and that the newspapers receiving it "depend solely upon [Eisner's] production for this weekly comic book feature."

Stating that Will "personally conceives and creates the entire contents of these books each week," Lounsbury went on to explain that the work was apportioned to a staff of artists, who completed it under Eisner's supervision. "There is no other person, to the knowledge of the Register and Tribune Syndicate, who could replace Mr. Eisner. . .In the event. . .Eisner were required to be absent. . .his production would cease. . .[and] this would deprive this staff of artists of their jobs."

It was a nice try, but it ultimately did not work.

Busy Arnold spent most of the summer of 1941 in a state of perpetual uproar over the contents of coming Quality Comics titles, to judge from his stream of mail to Eisner. In the following excerpts, one can see that he not only took Will to task for work produced in the Tudor City shop, but also used him as a sounding board for complaints about any other Quality freelancer who was giving him problems.

A sampling of typical Arnold notes to Will:

[June 9, 1941] "I am having one hell of a time getting Jack Cole to deliver his various pages in time to meet our schedules. He hasn't yet sent in 'Midnight' for the September issue of *Smash Comics* and I probably won't get the third episode of 'Death Patrol' for another ten days.

"Can you get another artist to take over 'Death Patrol' starting with the fourth installment? Cole is constantly falling behind on his work and apparently is making no great effort to catch up on lost time. . .

"If you can't get another suitable artist, I can get [Paul] Gustavson to take over. . ."

[June 12, 1941] "Jack Cole is falling way behind with his material and I think you should plan to get a replacement for him on 'Death Patrol' next month [November issue no. 4]. . .His delay is getting pretty serious. Also, I think you should try to get either [Jim G.] Chambers or [Tom] Hickey to take 'Archie Atkins' since Koda [Alex Kotzky?] is having a terrible time handling this.

"They [Love and McKelway of the *Washington Star*] not only object to the June 22nd issue of *The Spirit* (the one about Hitler), but they also don't like the June 1st issue (the one with the poetry). If you don't keep *The Spirit* along straight detective and espionage lines without any anti-Nazi propaganda, I am afraid that sooner or later we will get cancellations. . .

"Henry Martin and I had a few drinks with Lou Fine the other night and Lou doesn't think that the plan of having [Elmer] Wexler do the pencil work on 'Uncle Sam' with him doing the inking is so hot." [At this time, Arnold and Eisner were trying to pitch the idea of other comic book sections for newspapers to the Register and Tribune Syndicate; included in their plans were variations on *Uncle Sam* and *Military Comics*, which apparently never came out under the syndicate's aegis].

"In view of the fact that Lou did his best work on *The Doll Man*, Henry thinks it would be much better for Tony DiPreta to do the pencilling on *The Doll Man* and have Lou 'high spot' the important figures, with his background man finishing the balance of the pencils. While this would mean you would drop *Doll Man Quarterlies*, it would relieve you of the pressure on you at this time. . ."

[June 16, 1941] "I hope you are working double time in order to have Chuck Cuidera finish up the 11-page episode of *The Doll Man* and the other man complete the 10-page episode right away. It. . .is necessary that both Cuidera and the other man work triple time getting out these two installments. . .[or] we will be late in publishing the first installment of this magazine." [*Doll Man* no. 1 debuted in Fall, 1941; the "other man" Arnold refers to was apparently John Cassone, credited in *Overstreet* with work on the first issue].

[June 18, 1941] "I brought home a couple of copies of the September issue of *Military Comics* and read these over very carefully last night. I thought that this second issue was pretty awful and most of the stories were very fourth rate, including 'Blackhawk.' Unless you can get some better writers for *Military Comics*, I am inclined to believe that it is going to be an awful 'bust.' "

[June 25, 1941] "Will you please have Tex [Blaisdell] and the other boys in your studio check over the material for the weekly *[Spirit]* comic book more carefully than they have been doing in the past?. . .In the readyprint which Ed [Cronin] corrected in Stamford yesterday, one panel had part of Commissioner Dolan's body left out of it, and in another panel, one of the kids had an arm missing. This happens each week. . .

"Both Ed and I have noticed that in the last couple of issues, *Lady Luck* has been inked very poorly. Can't you get Nick to do a better job. . .? Another point. . .is that Nick has too many far shots and not enough closeups.

"The last eight pages of *The Spirit* looked like they had been hammered out in in no time and the job looked pretty second rate. . .

"In *Lady Luck* when Peecolo speaks, again could we ask you to see that Dick [apparently a letterer] connects the 'a' to Peecolo's doggerel Spanish. When the 'a' is separated from the rest of the word, it becomes an objective article and destroys the meaning of his dialogue.

". . .Have Dick and Tex watch corners, borders, etc. more carefully. They are awfully sloppy. . ."

[June 30, 1941] "In the future will you please have your boys check the sizes of all pages more carefully than they have done in the past? We are just sending the *Uncle Sam* book to the engraver and practically every page is either too long or too short. . ." [*Uncle Sam* no. 1 was released with an Autumn, 1941, cover date, and featured work by Eisner, Fine, and Cole.]

[June 30, 1941—letter no. 2] "P.S. As you know, the *Uncle Sam* book was pretty bad. You better start working on the no. 2 issue now so it is a better job."

[July 11, 1941] "Will you please put

the needle on the boys in your office, especially Dick who does the lettering. His work is awfully sloppy and there is an average of three or four mistakes in spelling on each page. . .The last four-page story of *Lady Luck* is very sloppy and disjointed and it is evident that it wasn't checked at all. . .This sort of stuff is just due to being sloppy so 'put the heat' on everyone and try to get them to do better work."

[July 11, 1941] "Here is another example of the terrible work your staff is doing; in one panel of *Lady Luck*, Lady Luck and another man are in a rowboat. In the next panel, there are two men in the boat with her."

[July 15, 1941] "Ed Cronin just called my attention to the fact that in the issue of the weekly comic book which you sent to me today, both *Lady Luck* and *Mr. Mystic* have the same stories. They are both built around kidnappings aboard yachts. . . This is very bad."

[July 17, 1941] "[*Uncle Sam Quarterly* no. 1] is certainly a very punk job and I am afraid that it is going to 'lay an egg' on us. So try and start working on the second issue right now and make this a better book in every way. . .Not only was [it] a very punk job but it certainly was not checked at all. There were at least 200 mistakes in spelling in the entire book and the same applies to *Doll Man Quarterly*. In this book your boys didn't even spell a word the same way twice in a row. . . Until we got these issues of *Uncle Sam Quarterly* and *Doll Man Quarterly*, both Ed Cronin and I thought Jerry Iger took the prize for sloppy work. But we are now convinced that your boys are way ahead of anyone in the business.

"P.S. Second Issue of *Military* is selling as bad as the first issue—no pickup in sight yet. First issue sold about 130,000 out of a 275,000 distribution."

[August 20, 1941] ". . .The fifth issue of *Military Comics* is. . .a very sloppy job as far as the artwork, lettering, etc. are concerned. The work turned out by Comic Supplements, Inc., is terrible and the lettering is atrocious. . .

"The episode of 'Death Patrol' was atrocious and. . .features like this will certainly kill *Military Comics* if they are not improved immediately. Cut out Tex Blaisdell's gag pages in the future as these are awful. . .

"Try and get Cuidera to get ahead of his installments of 'Blackhawk.' Judging by the fan mail we get here, this feature is very popular. . .but 'Blackhawk' will not be any good unless it is handled by Cuidera so it is important to get him ahead. . .

"I just read the first issue of *The Doll Man Quarterly* very carefully and it is certainly awful. Whoever writes your stories at Comic Supplements is rotten and paid absolutely no attention to the identity of the various characters. As you know, Martha Roberts in 'The Doll Man' which runs in *Feature Comics* has no knowledge that her fiance, Darell Dane, is in reality the Doll Man. However, in issue no. 1 of *The Doll Man Quarterly*, this identity is not maintained and Martha is well aware of the fact that Darell is the Doll Man. . .

"I don't regard your staff at Comic Supplements as being any good at all. I can get good second and third rate independent artists who are superior to the ones you have hired and any fourth rate writer is certainly better than Denby [Emanuel Demby, not previously credited in the *Who's Who* with specific work on *Doll Man*].

"P.S. The idea of 'The Sniper' is very good. . .however, the stories should be better and the art shouldn't be so crude. The artwork in the first issue of 'The Sniper' was awful—nearly as bad as 'Miss America,' which is the worst I have ever seen."

After months of running complaints like those excerpted above (and, believe me, these examples are only the tip of the iceberg—a complete transcript would fill a small book), Busy Arnold did something very unusual for him: He actually praised an artist whose work he was publishing.

It wasn't one of the legends like Cole or Fine who won his approval; it was the relatively obscure William Arthur Smith, who had worked on a number of Quality's second-banana series since 1938. Arnold's passing compliment of Smith's art comes toward the close of a long letter dated September 2, 1941:

"Have Bill Smith make 'Yankee Eagle' [in *Military]* entirely a naval feature with plenty of good shots of fighting ships. I think it best to have Smith continue 'Yankee Eagle' as his art work is good and keep Alden McWilliams on the nine pages of 'Secret War News.' "

Arnold also sent Eisner a copy of a personal letter he had mailed to Smith on that day:

"Bill Eisner told me over the telephone this morning that you had just delivered the eight pages of 'Yankee Eagle' for the January issue of *Military Comics*," he wrote. "Bill tells me that this is not a very good job due to the fact that you have been sick for the past week and he also says there is nothing about the Navy in these eight pages. . ."

The rest of the letter, sent to the only artist Arnold referred to as "good" in the whole series of letters in Eisner's files, continues Busy's typical litany of complaint:

". . .The last couple of installments have been very weak on naval shots showing battleships, airplane carriers, etc. I believe that accounts for the very poor showing of 'Yankee Eagle' which we have secured in a couple of polls."

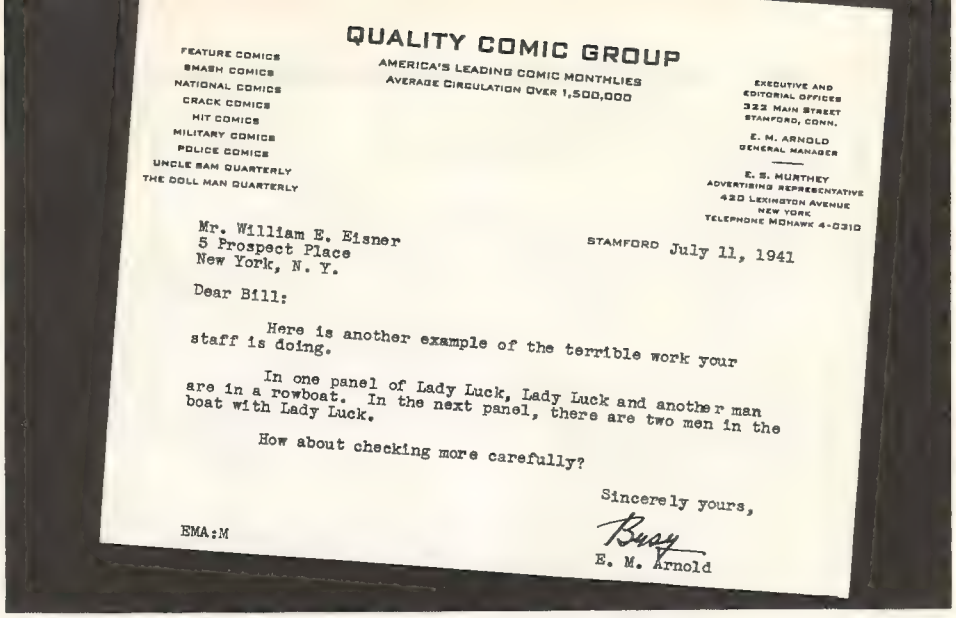
The "polls" referred to by Arnold probably existed only in his mind.

It must have been difficult to work for a man whose editorial vocabulary was slanted so heavily toward terms like "atrocious," "awful," "weak," "poor," "terrible" and "punk."

Eisner describes working for Arnold as "a little like trying to tie your shoelaces in a revolving door." Still, by all accounts, Busy Arnold was a respected employer, paid his freelancers well, and produced some of the best comics of the Golden Age.

The fall of 1941 marked the beginning of the *Spirit* daily strips, with all the syndicate uproar that event might be expected to produce. Then, in Spring, 1942, about a month before his induction into the Army, Will moved to Stamford, Connecticut, in order to help Busy Arnold set up a shop to handle both the comic books they had produced individually and the daily and Sunday *Spirit* episodes, which were being taken over by ghost writers and artists.

The move meant that Will now had to keep in touch with his Manhattan-based freelancers by courier and letter. Excerpts from the correspondence files of this 1941-1942 period (including some peppery exchanges between Eisner and Bob Powell and the revelation of a previously uncredited *Spirit* ghost writer) will be covered in the next issue of *Will Eisner's Quarterly*.



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Mr. William E. Eisner
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STAMFORD July 11, 1941

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EMA:M

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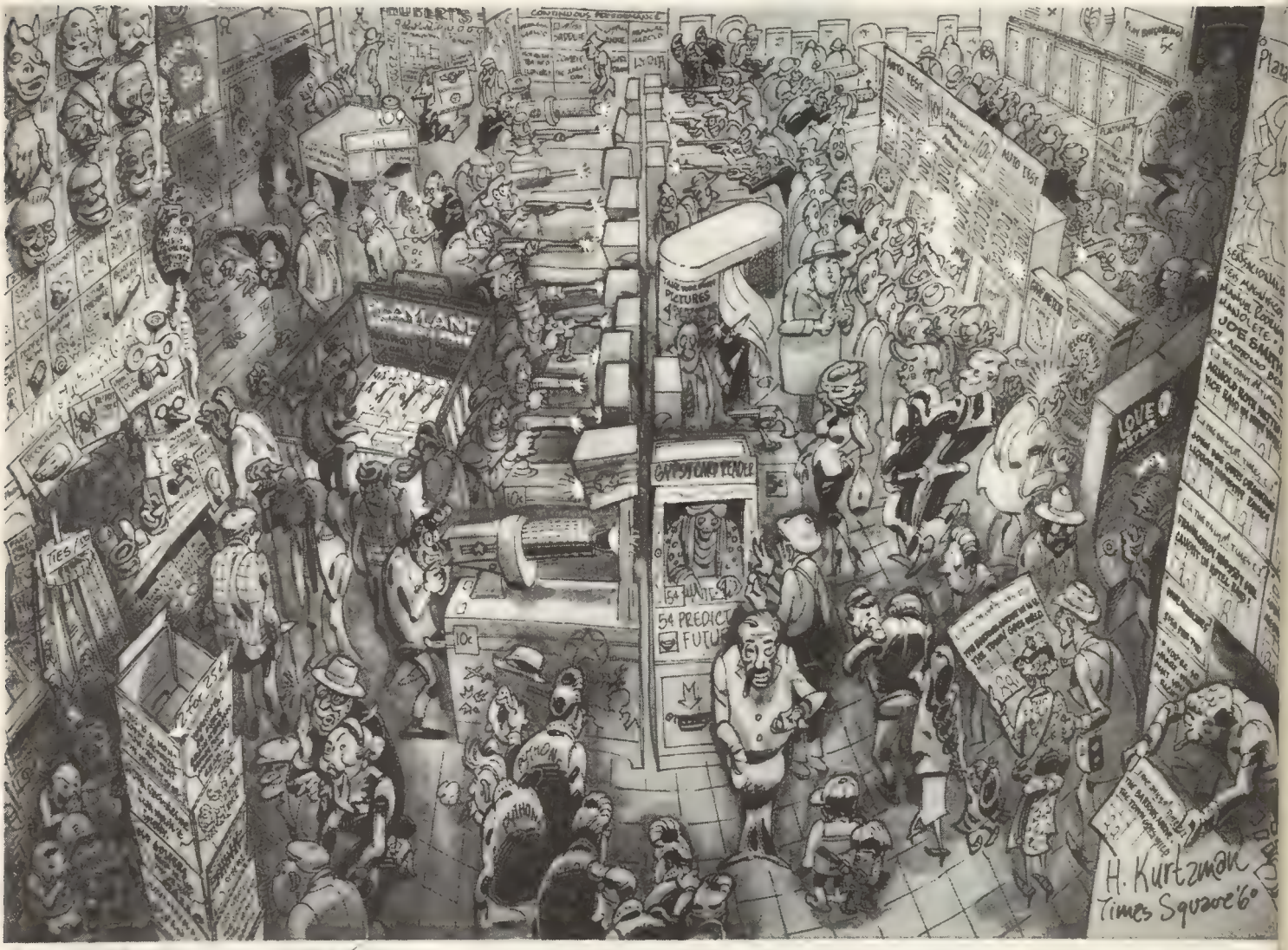

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Left to right: Goodwin, Sim, Eisner

EISNER GOODWIN SIM

Storytelling in Comics

While a guest at the Greensboro, North Carolina Comics Convention on July 28 of this year, Will Eisner appeared on a panel with Archie Goodwin and Dave Sim to discuss storytelling in the comics field. Goodwin is a comics writing veteran who currently edits *Epic Illustrated* for Marvel. Sim is the writer-artist who created *Cerebus the Aardvark*, flagship of the publishing house of Aardvark-Vanaheim. Goodwin was the moderator. Incidentally, at the end of the panel, there was a short question and answer period with the audience. Due to the limited technology present (a small tape recorder on the speaker's table), we were unable to transcribe the questions verbatim. We were able to get most of the answers, however.

GOODWIN: Here on the panel with me are Dave Sim and Will Eisner. Is there anyone here who doesn't know what Will Eisner and Dave Sim do or have done? [No response]. That makes the introduction very easy. Today's topic is storytelling. And if I can borrow a page from Tom Snyder's book—Mr. Dave Sim, Mr. Will Eisner, just what the heck is storytelling?

SIM: I think it's largely an instinct sort of thing. I read a review some time ago of a comic, discussing it from the standpoint of dancing, insofar as that if you're still going "One, two, three, step" then you haven't quite got it. If you've got it, you can watch somebody walking down the street and break the action into panels with the correct pacing for what you're trying to get across. It has to be practically second nature. It has to be the way you see things.

EISNER: I think storytelling is the art of communication. It's essentially no different from the caveman who came in from the fields after killing a bison and telling the people in the cave all about it. It's a direct piece of communication from one person to another. The skill—the art—with which a communicator tells it, and the tools he employs to tell it, are the things we're talking about here. We're into a medium that employs both words and pictures for the purpose of recounting an experience. We share with someone else an experience or observation. There are mediums that are totally film. There are mediums that are just words; they employ a code system people have to learn to understand. We are dealing with imagery, which is a far more primitive form of communication than pure words by themselves.

SIM: Even more than describing it as storytelling, it's story involvement. It's not just to communicate a story to someone else, but to have them lose the context. It's like being at a good movie. After awhile you forget you're watching a movie to the extent that you're involved. That's what makes for good storytelling. If I'm reading a comic book and gradually start reading faster and faster, I'll have to go back later to see how they did it. The best storytelling is involving enough that you don't stop and admire the technique as you're reading it. It moves you along.

EISNER: That's a good explanation on how to do it. Don't you think that what the storyteller has to say is as important, or are we just talking about the art, the skill, the technique of telling a story, without consideration of the story itself?

GOODWIN: What I was trying to push you toward is, what do you think is good comic book storytelling as opposed to novels or film or short stories? What do you think makes good comic book storytelling?

EISNER: I like those parameters. The differences in so-called comic book or sequential art is that you're employing

pictures or imagery in sequence, which has an effect on the kind of subject matter you're dealing with. Very often a picture itself has a message. We are all very oriented toward imagery. We understand a phrase coming from an individual that's modified by a physical gesture. These things are terribly important within the frame of our understanding of what is being said, or what the message is. In comics, you are dealing with words and images in a proportion that has no ground rules. There are no textbooks telling us how many words per panel there should be, or how many words per story there ought to be. I've done stories with no words at all; eight pages of nothing but imagery, and told a story. I think you must understand first the medium in which you are working and then deal with the kind of story that you're trying to tell.

SIM: I think that's entirely true. The proportion varies. You can't arbitrarily say, as an example, that you can only have 20 words in a balloon. I just finished a story where Cerebus dictates a letter, and the whole letter is contained in the word balloon. That establishes a certain context, that this was dictated verbatim as it came out; that he didn't pause to think about what he'd say next. It creates a good visual picture of this enormous chunk of words, and it changes the pacing, slows it down on that page. I think that's a lot of what you have to determine as you're going along: How much of the proportion is the writer and how much of the proportion is the artist? It will change from page to page. There are definitely pages where I feel much more like a writer—the reason for a particular page is for the writing. There are other pages where—while it's true that I'm writing pictures—it's the pictures that are going to bring the idea across. Very often that can be the most difficult thing to do. The stories I'm doing for Archie's *Epic* magazine, I've set myself the boundary of not having words in them. It is silent narrative. That can be very difficult. You can't sit there and jot down lines of dialogue and eventually get the context from that. You have to start making pictures in your head, trying to create funny images that will play off each other.

EISNER: That leads me to a question I'd like to ask you, Archie. What is the role, in the world of comic books, of the writer? What do you see as the role of the writer?

GOODWIN: It probably depends on the project. When you're writing, essentially you're collaborating with the artist. Ideally, the two of you are able to play off each other, give each other ideas. A good writer should realize that what you are doing isn't created in stone, so that if an artist picks on something good, you can take advantage of it. You can incorporate it, or if you're working plot, pencil, script, in a line, you can play off what you see in the pencils.

EISNER: Well, do the writers see themselves as the creator or the innovator, and the artist as the illuminator of the idea?

GOODWIN: I think some writers do. Again, it depends. If someone has come up with an entire concept for the story or the ongoing character, written a full script and presented it to the artist, certainly they would see themselves as the creator. However, even in that position, if you're at all wise or at all interested in comics, I would certainly want an artist who I could draw into the creation process, and make him feel like a part of it.

EISNER: Okay, I understand that. The artist who undertakes such a mission has to function or work in service to the initial idea. But in the beginning, the idea, the basic concept for that story, is in the hands of the writer. Many artists, for example, particularly many students of mine in school, say "Well, I'm not a writer. I need a writer. I can't do it." I don't often believe that. What has happened is that he's been told he can't write, or he doesn't want to write. Usually, he just wants to draw his pictures. He doesn't want the responsibility of fashioning an idea and developing a plot, developing all the cohesive ingredients that make the structure of the story.

GOODWIN: I think when you're an artist, particularly when you're beginning, it's enough of an enormous task to just master drawing and use of the art tools. To suddenly be saddled with the responsibility for story and dialogue puts a lot between you and maybe the thing you want to do most, which is the drawing. So then having the advantage of working with someone else's script is good. . .

SIM: . . .I think it's one of those chicken and egg type of situations. Most of the companies work on the basis of a writer, a penciller, an inker. If someone is proficient as a penciller, would it be fair to have a company policy that everybody had to be able to do everything? In the case of Marvel, there's certainly nothing to hold back anyone who can't ink or can't write from establishing quite a good reputation in the field, if he has at least one skill.

GOODWIN: Well, I think that's always been true, but one of the nice things about this panel is that the two of you do it all, so it would be interesting to get your own personal approaches to it. As a writer, I can only do so much. I need an artist to go through and fulfill some of the material. I find it very hard if I'm writing a script and I don't know who the artist is going to be. I find I tend to overwrite or come up with things that may be impossible for the artist to do. It's much easier to write a story if I know who the artist will be. I would think it would be a tremendous luxury if you're writing material you know you will be able to draw. How do you personally do it? Do you generate images?

SIM: I carry a notebook around when I'm starting an issue and I'll usually start with the first page. I will have episodes in the story I intend to get to. Those are sort of the cornerstones. Then it's a matter of having natural progressions or natural transitions from this situation to that situation. *Cerebus* no. 65 ends with Cerebus walking out to a window in his hotel and making a speech to a crowd outside. Two or three pages before that, the archbishop he's talking to suggests that that's what he should do. There was then the matter of figuring something funny or interesting that would make a good transition from the point of "this is what he's going to do" to "this is where he's going to do it." That can be difficult if the transition doesn't come readily to mind. I don't know if you find this, but there are times when I get up in the morning and I have to write, and I feel more like an artist that day...

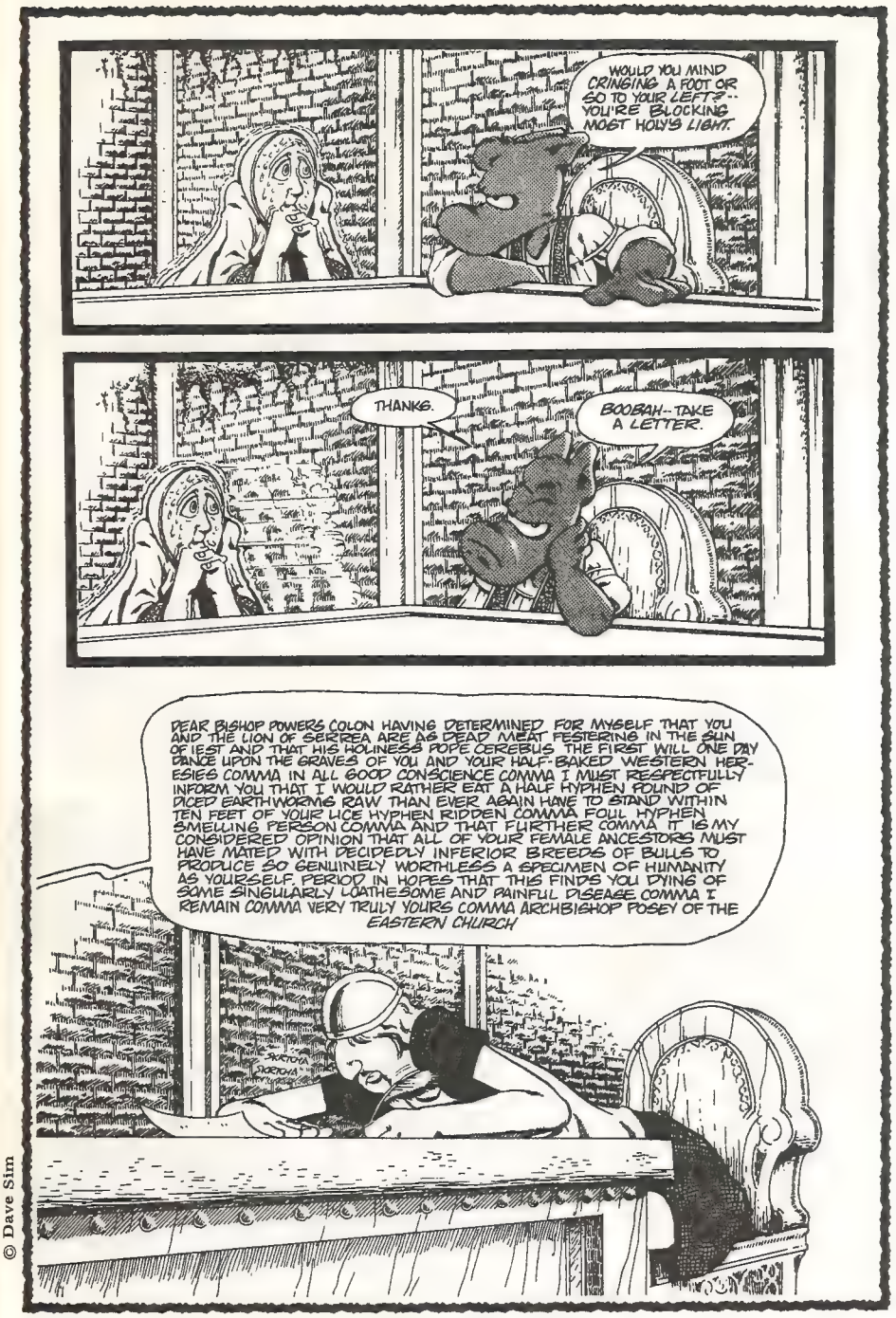
EISNER: No, I have no schizophrenia like that [laughs].

SIM: I do! No I don't! [Crowd laughs].

EISNER: Well, everybody approaches the thing differently. I start with something I want to say, I generally start at the ending. Like one day I get up and I have another story to do, so I'm going to do a story. Generally these things germinate in your head over a period of years. *Signal From Space* was an idea I'd had in my head for some time. I wrote the basic plot on an airplane coming from Frankfurt, Germany. I was looking out the window watching the clouds, the clouds looked like something you could walk on. I was thinking about the planets and so forth, thinking about what would happen to us here if we truly got a signal from space. Something we could prove was a signal, and was an intelligent message of some kind. What would happen on Earth here? As I thought about that, it seemed to me it would make an awfully good story, and I wrote the basic plot of it down on the back of a TWA envelope. I came back and I started with the ending in my mind and worked my way back to the very beginning of the story. I opened it up as I thought about it. I ultimately created it as one piece. I always write it all out first, even the long continuing chapter by chapter novels. I sketch it out.

SIM: The only thing I can think of that I could compare that with is the 25 issue "High Society" storyline. Basically, I had an ending in mind, or after awhile I had an ending in mind, but first the structure came, the idea that I was going to do a 500 page story. Basically what I did was establish the threads of the plot. They were just sort of introduced but not elaborated on for the first half of the story, the first 12 issues, and then with the the succeeding 12 issues, I tied things together.

EISNER: I'm very reassured by the


WOULD YOU MIND CRINGING A FOOT OR SO TO YOUR LEFT?.. YOU'RE BLOCKING MOST HOLY'S LIGHT.
THANKS.
BOOBAH--TAKE A LETTER.
DEAR BISHOP POWERS COLON HAVING DETERMINED FOR MYSELF THAT YOU AND THE LION OF SERREA ARE AS DEAD MEAT FESTERING IN THE SUN OF IEST AND THAT HIS HOLINESS POPE CEREBUS THE FIRST WILL ONE DAY DANCE UPON THE GRAVES OF YOU AND YOUR HALF-BAKED WESTERN HERESIES COMMA IN ALL GOOD CONSCIENCE COMMA I MUST RESPECTFULLY INFORM YOU THAT I WOULD RATHER EAT A HALF HYPHEN POUND OF DICED EARTHWORMS RAW THAN EVER AGAIN HAVE TO STAND WITHIN TEN FEET OF YOUR LICE HYPHEN RIDDEN COMMA FOUL HYPHEN SMELLING PERSON COMMA AND THAT FURTHER COMMA IT IS MY CONSIDERED OPINION THAT ALL OF YOUR FEMALE ANCESTORS MUST HAVE MATED WITH DECIDEDLY INFERIOR BREEDS OF BULLS TO PRODUCE SO GENUINELY WORTHLESS A SPECIMEN OF HUMANITY AS YOURSELF. PERIOD IN HOPES THAT THIS FINDS YOU DYING OF SOME SINGULARLY LOATHESOME AND PAINFUL DISEASE COMMA I REMAIN COMMA VERY TRULY YOURS COMMA ARCHBISHOP POSEY OF THE EASTERN CHURCH
SKRTCH
SKRTCH
© Dave Sim

comparison [chuckles].

GOODWIN: Both of you, if you're doing a longer piece as opposed to a tightly knit short story, and if you come up with a character that began as a supporting character, but you've grown to like that character, do you allow yourself the latitude to stand apart and give him more room?

EISNER: Oh yes. Arthur Miller said that characters take on lives of their own. In the case of *Signal From Space*, the major character took on a life of his own, and after awhile, I couldn't make him do things that I knew he wouldn't do.

SIM: The best characters work that way. You'll find that the better the character is, the more clear-cut the personality, and, like you say, it's almost like trying to force a very independent personality into a channel where it doesn't want to go. It may help the plot.....

EISNER: Well, there's a basic honesty with which you approach these things. Of course, the dishonesty comes in if you are the artist and the writer at the same time, you never give yourself a problem that you can't solve.

SIM: That's right.

EISNER: So if I get an idea for 5,000 Indians coming over the hill, I scratch that idea so that there are two Indians coming over the hill [General laughter].

SIM: I remember Howard Chaykin saying that he liked to do Westerns, but he didn't like to draw horses. I said "How can you do a Western if you don't like drawing horses," and he said, "Well, it was very Shakespearean. There were a lot of people pointing off-screen and saying 'Look! There goes a horse!' " [Laughter].

EISNER: I think the method of approaching writing is unique to each individual. Within the context of trying to determine the role of the writer versus the artist, in a field that has been commonly employing writers and artists as two separate entities, I think that that makes this kind of discussion very worthwhile. A lot of comics artists start out their careers shaped by the fact that they are working with someone else's script always, and the writer who enters this field, and Archie, I think you mentioned this in the previous panel...

GOODWIN: I think that I said it couldn't be done.

EISNER: Yes, and I think you told it the way it really is, that it is very hard for a writer to break into a field unless he joins an artist. They can weld something together which then becomes viable. In the end, the product is the drawing, it is the total composite.

SIM: I'd like to get back to storytelling. There are actually two sets of dynamics: the story, or the overall plot; and then there's the dynamics of the characters. I think what we're talking about when we say the characters take on lives of their own is that very often, we can't impose the story on the characters. You develop traits in them as you go along, and then all of a sudden, they may not conform to what you want on the 50th page of what you've drawn...

EISNER: Obviously you don't see Superman reciting poetry or giving a Shakespearean soliloquy. I think that's part of the craftsmanship involved. I was more concerned with the self-imposed or recognized roles of each character. I feel very strongly about the fact that there is an element of writing in the drawing. That's very, very important...

GOODWIN: And if there isn't, then you don't have a comic book. You've got a Big Little Book or something else...

EISNER: ...Or you have a tapestry.

GOODWIN AND SIM: Yes!

EISNER: Many of the books that are turned out today, particularly in the more glossy magazines, as far as I'm concerned, are huge tapestries. Magnificent, stunning art which overwhelms the story...and there's nothing you can do with that.

GOODWIN: I've published many a tapestry.

SIM: As an example, then, you get into expression and whatnot, and the fact that an eyebrow at an appropriate moment in the story will communicate far more than any kind of physical thought balloon or....

EISNER: That's a directorial skill that you can't even discuss, but you have to know it's there. Body postures, all the tricks of an actor, are very important. It comes under the column I would like to label "imagery," with the understanding that imagery is the visual language. There is a visual language, as we all know...

SIM: Yeah, there's an implicit understanding in what one arched eyebrow means...

EISNER: Well, there are gestures and postures that are unique to different cultures around the world and they are not universal; and there are some that are universal. Some anthropologists a few years ago, found a tribe in New Guinea and discovered that they were smiling at moments appropriate to the kind of discussion they were having. They were using gestures that were known and understood to people in a more civilized society. But gestures and postures are a unique form—very primitive, you might say—communication, language communication. I think that's very much a part of the skills that an artist must know and understand and have at his command. Once having said that, and having given those skills to an audience, he must be able to employ them in service of the story and what the writer wants him to say. If the writer says, "This man is about to pull the trigger on a gun but he can't do it, it's a very painful thing," someone has to make a decision as to how many panels you're going to devote to that struggle of pulling the trigger or pulling the pin on a hand grenade, or whatever it is he's about to do that's against his nature. I want to know, who's making that decision at Marvel and DC? The writer or the artist?

SIM: It's a case by case basis, I think. If you look at the *X-Men* issue that Barry Windsor-Smith drew and Chris Claremont wrote, I think certainly Chris would probably agree there's more there for the writer to work with. There's a great deal more thinking on the part of the artist. If it's an artist who is taking the bare bones of the plot and drawing the expression and whatnot, if it is brought across as well as it should be, then it becomes easier for the writer to put a couple of words in the panel, or maybe not have any words at all. There are also degrees, too.....

EISNER: Who's making the decision when you say, "decides not to have any words at all?" Who makes that decision?

SIM: The writer....

GOODWIN: I would say, yes, on a regular Marvel book, the editor or writer, and hopefully the artist, too, would be involved in a long-range plotting situation. They might be plotting one specific issue or plotting a general outline of where the book's going for the next three to six issues. The writer would probably come up with some specifics, things he wants to do. The editor and artist, if they're in general agreement, then the decision would have to be made ...Okay, with this character in the situation you described, where he stops to pull a trigger and finds himself unable to do it, it's important then to decide that this is the accumulation....

EISNER: You as who, the writer?

GOODWIN: Or editor. Possibly the writer and maybe the editor would decide something like that. The writer might say, "And we'll have this scene where he wants to do it but he can't," and the editor might say, "That's great! That's important, it's taken us three issues to lead up to that. Make sure you give it two pages." If it's a one issue story, you would give it a page, and it might be the writer or the artist...or the editor...

EISNER: What bothers me is that, in my shop, it's not made on that basis. The decision of how many panels to devote to this man trying to pull the trigger depends on what it is he's doing and how important that particular element is...

GOODWIN: I thought that that was more or less what I was saying.

EISNER: But the decision is made, it seems to me, not that far in advance. The decision is made as the page is being laid out, and as the story flows. What I want to know is, does the writer say in his directions to the artists, "This man can't pull the trigger, he's being reflective about it, and I want you to devote three or four panels to this."

GOODWIN: He might very well say that, yes.

SIM: Again I think it depends on the editor, it depends on the artist and it depends on the writer and how they work together.

EISNER: Well, all these depend on them, but I was trying to find the standard rule.

GOODWIN: I don't think there is a standard rule, because it would vary from company to company, and from individual to individual. I think a myth has grown out of the Marvel way of working. It maybe started when Stan Lee and Jack Kirby and Stan Lee and Steve Ditko would come in and talk about the story and Stan would do a page or half-page

synopsis or something like that. I think it's changed greatly since then. Since there are now many more writers involved, the synopsis done now is generally more elaborate. Some writers will give the artists an almost page by page description of what's going on. It's certainly grown. It's not quite as up in the air as maybe it once was. You still have the situation, I'm sure, where someone may be collaborating, and as he's drawing, the artist will suddenly realize the "The way I've done this, this is a beautiful moment here. I can see this scene being expanded so it will be even more effective," and so on. In that case he will probably call the editor and ask if it is okay to go ahead. The editor may say yes. Or they'll consult with the writer and they'll all agree. Or they'll say, "Gee, that's very nice, but if you devote two pages to them opening the door, you won't have time for the assassination of the president in the end, which we've been sort of building up to." You'll have situations like that.

SIM: Or then you have the situation again with the *X-Men*. As Barry Windsor-Smith drew, it was expanded to accomodate the expanding storyline, wasn't it? It started off as a regular-size issue, and then the decision was made that you can't get all this across...

GOODWIN: Let's do it as a double issue?

SIM: Yes.

GOODWIN: Yes, that may have happened in that instance. I wasn't there, I can't tell you for sure. However, it's the kind of thing they wouldn't let happen very often. I think the teamup of Chris Claremont and Barry Windsor-Smith was enough of an event to support the expansion.

EISNER: Well, I recognize the fact that there is no absolute formula, and only the success of the story itself attests to the success of the combination. But we're talking about storytelling as an ingredient in the whole art form.

GOODWIN: Right.

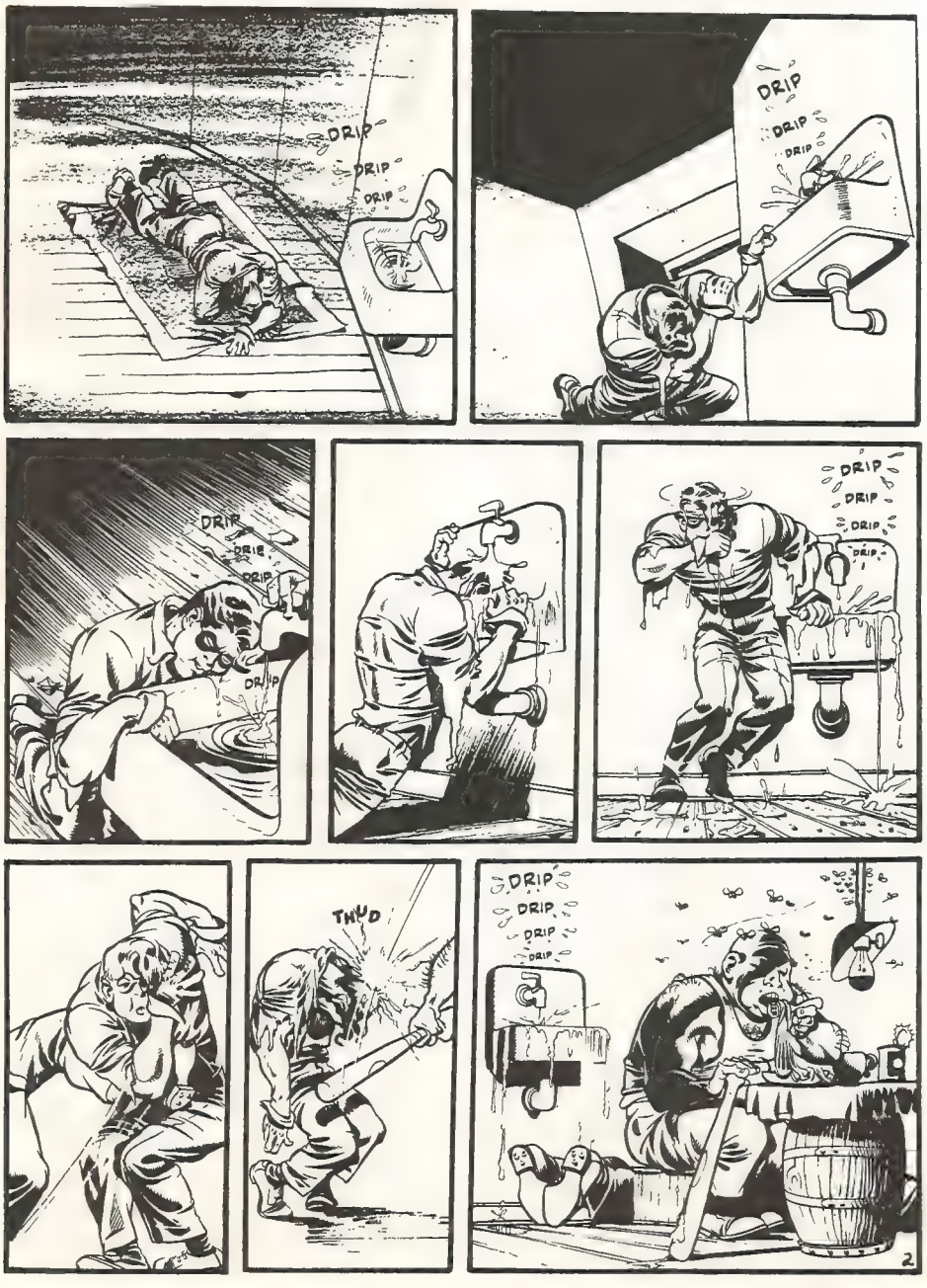
EISNER: I regard it as a major function, and I maintain that the art is in service to the story itself. The artist must be able to tell a story within itself and he must be able to withhold some of the pyrotechnics that he's capable of when it is necessary to tell a story. I think one of the dangers, at least in the shops that I've run, where there was a writer and an artist working independently but together, is that on the edges there was a kind of a clash of purpose. The writer writing with words and the artist writing with pictures would meet somewhere on the edge, and the artist, for example, would hesitate to do something that I would probably do. I would take a page of dialogue and throw it out and go into a pantomime. Most artists wouldn't. I never faced that situation because I never worked with another writer. But I would arbitrarily throw that dialogue out because I felt and feel that that was the way to do it. I wouldn't do it because I felt I wanted my art to dominate at that point, but rather I felt that I would tell the story better. Now on those cases, you can have a real clash of judgment...

GOODWIN: Well, that's when you really need an editor, although the theory is if you've been given the script by the editor, the editor has already approved it. However, I think if it were a good editor and a good writer, and they both realized that what you wanted would make it better, I would think it would behoove them to go along with you. You leave yourself open to make those kind of changes.

SIM: It's basically just dividing up the decision making. As an example, Bill Loebs, who does *Journey*, mentioned a thing to me awhile ago that he doesn't try for a natural break between his issues. He's doing an ongoing story, so he doesn't feel compelled to have a beginning, middle and end in the 20 pages alloted to him. I realized, the more I thought about it, that I was kind of partial to that too, but I'd been self-imposing a structure, the "this had better finish off with at least the semblance of an ending" type of thing. Now I'm trying to allow myself the luxury to say that this is where the story is going, and it doesn't naturally conclude on page 20. There's no reason that I can't say, "Well, stay tuned till next week." I don't do recaps and whatnot to explain what went before...

EISNER: I wouldn't necessarily agree with that because I think that the reader has to be satisfied to some degree and there should be enough discipline...I think it's a cop-out, frankly, I think Loebs is copping out [chuckles]. I think you can put a satisfying enclosure within a given effort, because I've done it over and over again.

GOODWIN: I would think also that



you run a terrific danger of very sagging dramatic pace, to a certain extent, if you're not planning for climaxes.

EISNER: In a medium like this, where you have a two month gap, or at least a month's gap, between chapters or stories, how are you going to leave a reader with somebody about to walk off a cliff and in the next chapter, you open with him being saved? I think we're talking about needles and pins here right now, but I would object to that if I were editing.

SIM: I don't think I would do it as a regular rule. I was just indicating that there are different structures. I don't feel inhibited now in doing a completely slow-paced issue. There doesn't have to be a melodramatic peak at this point or two melodramatic peaks here. There really is no set rule...

GOODWIN: I think what you're really against is artificial dramatics.

SIM: Yes, the imposition of "I better do something here." And the thing of doing a humor comic and feeling compelled to make at least 15 of the 20 pages funny. Certainly I felt that way after 10 to 11 issues, there wasn't really a track record for it. But after 60 monthly issues there is required a change of pace. There's a need to give the overall story, the 1300 pages, more of a wave pattern of its own, rather than making sure each issue has its own individual wave pattern—an up and a down, an up and a down, and finishing with an up. Then when you pick up the next issue, you start in again.

EISNER: I can't argue with that. You have to go back to what was said about individual choice of pace...

GOODWIN: I think you have to know your audience very well. If you don't, that's a very dangerous....

EISNER: That brings me to what I'd like to say about the writing business. I write for an audience. I'm thinking about a particular experience level, an intellectual level, and almost an age level when I'm writing. I'm writing as though I'm writing a letter to somebody. I don't know, in exploring this, how you people feel about it, but that's how I feel.

GOODWIN: I'm generally trying to write something that I'd like to read myself.

SIM: Yes, there's an element of that. I also tend to have specific individuals in mind. When I found out that Harlan Ellison was a fan of *Cerebus*, that raises...

EISNER: You started writing to him, were you? [Laughter].

SIM: To the extent of saying, "Hey, come on, we better wake up here, because Harlan Ellison is going to read this and he's going to know good writing from bad."

EISNER: And in between, you're saying, "Now, Harlan, get this." [Laughter].

SIM: "This one's for you, Harlan. Pay attention." Yeah. Or the same as Barry Windsor-Smith. There is a certain attitude that helps me to think that, okay, these are people whose work I admire and if I know they are reading the book, I feel less inclined to say "Oh, well, this is good enough," or "This will get by." I feel more compelled to expand the borders or try something new...

EISNER: Well, what I'm talking about really is not necessarily my own pace, but a basic problem here is, when you are writing, you're dealing with the problem of evoking a common experience. When the writer says, "The laughter was like a babbling brook," he is expecting the reader to have heard a babbling brook, to understand that. You do this with visual imagery, too, by evoking a common experience. Once you begin doing that, which is the very essence of writing, you have to take into account the age and the experience level of the reader to whom you are addressing this piece.

GOODWIN: I think that if there's a fault in comics, it's that common experience and really true human touches are too often left out. You don't necessarily get the little moments. You always get the big moments in comics.

EISNER: I think those little moments make the difference between really good storytelling...those are the things that people notice. People have seen those little things, they know they are there. It adds validity to the message.

SIM: You have good and bad storytelling, and then you have like momentary inspiration where you do something that you think, "Yes, that's a good moment." It's only later on, when 20 people come up and all single that out as THE moment in that issue....I think that's completely out of your hands. You can't sit down and say, "I'm going to do something in this issue that is really going to cut to the heart of everybody, and will become a common and shared experience that everyone can understand." But I think if you're trying to be an artist or if you're trying to produce "art", that the discipline involved is trying to remain as open to that as possible, and to try and recognize when you've got a good moment or break...

EISNER: Then why do all the characters that I see in comic books have heroes stand up and say, "I am going to shoot you now!" or "Ye gods, he shot me!" Or having a balloon explaining something that the picture panel clearly shows. Why do they do that over and over?

SIM: There's bad comics [laughter]. There's more bad comics than there are good comics. I don't just mean that in a present day context. Since 1933, if you stacked up every comic book, and God forbid, somebody should sit down and read all of them, the amount of good material—or great material—is going to be one per cent, maybe less, of that total volume.

GOODWIN: You see that same thing in a movie or on television, where suddenly two people are in a room and they explain the plot to you: "Well, I have to meet my sister," and they give you a lot of exposition. I don't think only comics do that. Often comics are guilty of that, having them say exactly what you've already seen.

SIM: I think there's more of a danger that a writer and artist combination... Again, Archie points out, if you don't know who is going to draw the script, you want to make sure that at least the story makes sense. If he can't draw it, what is he supposed to put in that panel? You're going to have something in the caption that says "This is what's going on."

GOODWIN: We're in the area of bad storytelling...

SIM: Yes, and there's a lot of bad storytelling from writer-artists too. There's a lot of amateur material that people bring up to me at conventions ...and obviously the person is a writer-artist. He's drawn the story, written the dialogue and lettered it, but sure enough, there's someone standing up there saying "I'm going to shoot you!" There're people who can do it, and there're people who can't.

EISNER: A lot of young people coming in the field have only the large proportion, as you put it, of bad comics to use as models. They've learned their craft or cut their teeth on the trash they've seen.

GOODWIN: They may do very bad comics based on very good comics material...

SIM: Yes, you can do *A Contract With God*, and someone can say, "I'm going to do a comic book just like this but it's going to be about an Arab kid living in Milwaukee." And he can sit down and draw it and badly render it and use terrible dialogue. But he still can say "I was inspired by *A Contract With God*. He just wasn't inspired in the right way. Or he didn't have that much in him...

EISNER: Well, that depends.

GOODWIN: Or someone can say, "Frank Miller is a great comics storyteller, therefore I'm only going to do five horizontal panels on a page." They pick up the tips that a really good person may do for a very valid reason, and may think, "Oh, yeah, that looks really neat, those little sliver vertical panels. I'm going to do 'em."

EISNER: You're quite right. People attribute success to some of the surface things of a major success and they don't realize that the underlying story is the key

GOODWIN: Do you think we should take a few questions from the audience now? [General agreement].

EISNER: Are there any questions? [No response]. Good. [Laughter].

GOODWIN: Are there any answers?

As stated earlier, the questions from the audience were basically inaudible on tape. One question dwelt on the use of

drawing out a moment in comic art. The questioner used as an example a page from "A Life Force," in the first issue of Will Eisner's Quarterly. *The page showed Rifka recovering from a heart seizure while talking to her son on the telephone. The questioner commented on Eisner's and Sim's ability to draw out a piece of time with a minimum of dialogue, saying that such moments are "one of the powers of the medium itself."*

EISNER: I think it is one of the powers, and it's one of the inherent differences between comics and film or the printed medium. Comics move at their own rate of speed. The reader is moving at his own rate of speed. He can stop and look at the action at his own speed judgment. Time is nothing but our own measure of experience. The length of experience is really what time is. Our perception of experience is our perception of time. The film is presented to you one frame at a time at great speed. You see nothing until the director wants you to see the next frame. In print, you have the leisure of going back over it, and as you said earlier, savoring it and devoting the same amount of time. At the same time, the writer has the problem of deciding the space he's going to take, because he's always dealing with space. The action that you described took a page and a half, close to two pages. The question I had was, was it worth two pages to show that particular piece of action in the amount of space that I wanted to show it? It employed white space for time. I used the reactions to a panel for a pause, and there were a whole bunch of elements that went into the structure of that particular action. Film is moving along at a tremendous rate. It has the advantage of reality, speed and motion, and sound, which we don't have in comics. The reader must provide the sound, and he must provide the time shown from panel to panel. We haven't the luxury to use the devices like the stop-action frames at the end of the average television or moving picture, where the two characters are suddenly frozen in a frame.

GOODWIN: Everything we do is stop action.

EISNER: That's exactly it. We're selecting out of a series of actions a given picture.

SIM: When you're a writer-artist, I think a lot of times you're a frustrated director and a frustrated actor. That's where the questions come in when you say...

EISNER: I'm not frustrated. [Laughter]. I'm acting it all out while I'm doing it.

SIM: I'm frustrated AND schizophrenic. [Laughter].

EISNER: You've got problems.

SIM: [Laughs] Let's say you have the situation of a character dying. The director says, "We only have a half-page for this character to die." The actor says, "No, I want to take three pages to really get across all the different emotions, the different subtleties and things." It becomes a constant tension back and forth. Certainly the director wants to move it along so he can get on to the next bit, so he can get as much as possible in 20 pages. But often, the actor is saying, "Let's take four pages with it and really get the point across and finish with one perfect moment, one perfect expression that will just sell the whole thing."

EISNER: Sensitivity enters into the process, also. Sensitivity is most important because when you're executing a sequence of the kind in "Life Force," you've got to feel what you think the audience is capable of feeling. This has to do with the intellectual level of the audience.

SIM: If you can't make yourself cry with the story, you're not going to make anyone else cry.

EISNER: Oh, exactly. That's the penultimate achievment. If you can get somebody to look at one of your pages and feel emotional, that's, as far as I'm concerned, success. Success in the medium we're working with. Success in the Marvel or DC world is 300,000 copies.

GOODWIN: No, I think we're also happy if people can come up to us and say they were moved by something. And they are. Sometimes I worry that they're moved too much too easily. The same thing can happen in a Marvel issue.

EISNER: That's good, I'm glad to hear that.

GOODWIN: There was a story for *Spider-Man* called "The Boy Who Collected Spider-Man," which was essentially written in the form of a newspaper column. It was about a boy who lives in an orphanage and who collects all kinds of Spider-Man memorabilia. He's thrilled to meet Spider-Man. And at the end you find out that the boy is in a home for terminally-ill cancer patients. It's a tremendously moving story and it's in a Marvel comic and it's about a superhero. So it can happen, and we're proud and happy that we could do it.

Another questioner talked about various writer-artist teams currently working at Marvel, and that "the Marvel style varies widely from issue to issue. It depends on the team. It's important to keep in mind that sometimes the Marvel style works and sometimes it doesn't."

SIM: But then a single writer-artist sometimes works and sometimes it doesn't. There's also definitely a fine line between experimentation and self-indulgence.

EISNER: Well said.

SIM: You find out very quickly in the feedback in the letters column that certainly what I would call experimental is viewed as self-indulgent [Laughter].

EISNER: There are people in this field who are athletes, they are comic-illustrators only. That's all they want to be. There are those who use their drawing skills as a vehicle for saying what they want to say.

SIM: Or as we were talking about the other night, I see myself as a writer who draws, rather than as an artist who has to say, "Well, I need a story to go with my drawings." I'm glad—or I hope—I have enough drawing capability to bring my writing across.

EISNER: I agree with that.

A question about writer and artist teams was directed at Eisner, inquiring if he thought writer-artist teams were detrimental to good comics.

EISNER: I haven't been critical, I've been suspicious of it, which is slightly different [Laughter]. I can cite a successful case, Siegel and Shuster, for example. Simon and Kirby were a successful case; Stan Lee and Kirby were a successful situation. I'm not too familiar with other teams. In each of the cases I mentioned, there was a psychological meshing between the two. They all understood each other. The artist, though, was an extension of the writer, in a sense, even though the artist himself didn't think of himself as an extension of the writer. Siegel had a very strong determination of what it was he wanted to say and what he wanted to do.

SIM: He's still like that. I just drew a story for him.

EISNER: Shuster was able to fit within that kind of balance. Somewhere there's a dynamic, a line where artist and writer will clash, UNLESS the two are so beautifully meshed that they go right through that. A few years ago, a very good friend of mine wrote a book called *The Age of Freedom* in which he wrote about the danger of computers and how they are infringing on our personal freedoms. I did some illustrations for it. He did a second book on legal ethics, called *The Rule of Reason.* He asked me if I would illustrate that. I did so. I had enjoyed doing the spot illustrations in the first book, and he was a good friend. The second book had to do with the relationship between a lawyer and his client, and I came up with a series of visualizations of these ideas, which the writer became incensed about. He said I was writing my own book. That was an incident where I picked up what the writer had said—I agreed with him 100 per cent—yet I developed my own theme on the subject. Which is why I like my own stuff, generally [Laughter].

SIM: I think you're going to have a dichotomy between artist and writer even when they mesh perfectly. If you're dealing with adult issues—if you're addressing morality or ethics or whatever, and the writer has produced a personal script and he gives it to the artist as if the artist were a functionary, then there probably won't be too many problems. If the artist has his own views, he's not

concluded on next page

apt to throw himself into it and advance the writer's viewpoint, because it feels as if the artist is betraying his own ethics.

EISNER: That's where my suspicion about the writer and artist relationship comes about. When someone comes in my class, they will do writing as well as art. I feel that even if after an artist leaves my clutches and will be drawing only, he must have an understanding and respect for the elements of writing after having done it himself. If I were working in tandem with a writer, I would have to really understand what the guy is saying. I would have to submit myself to that force with all the power that I had. I see so much of this self-indulgence we were talking about in comics today. I see a lot of those tapestries in defiance almost of what the writer has done.

GOODWIN: I think in *Epic Illustrated* and *Heavy Metal* and those types of magazines, you see a fair amount of that because there is definitely a feeling on the artists' part of reluctance to bring a writer in....

EISNER: I'd like to say in defense of the artist who's working in this field that the artist realizes very soon that it is the artwork that is being judged initially, and not the story. A reader flips through the book and says, "My God, great artwork, I have to have it." And he takes a chance on it being a good story. Very often it's that kind of thing that makes my toes curl when somebody comes up to me and says "I enjoy your artwork, I think it's terrific," and I wish I could grab him by the lapels and tell him "say something about my *story*, will you?" [Laughter].

EISNER ITEMS FOR SALE

SPIRIT SUNDAY SECTIONS. Send S.A.S.E. for sale list of over 270 original newspaper sections and other Spirit items. John Benson, 205 W. 80th St., No. 2-E, New York NY 10024.

WILL TRADE Warren Spirits 1, 2, 3 for Star Fems 1 or Warren Comix International no.1. C.O. Hunt, 446 Norval Av., Buffalo NY 14213.

WILL TRADE Spirit Magazine no.25 and The Comic Reader no. 125 (Eisner/Spirit cover) for Spirit Magazine no.18 or Fantagor no.4. S.A.S.E. for details to Chris Bors, 121 Texas Lane, Ithaca NY 14850.

OVER 25 ORIGINAL Spirit sections and 25 other comics for sale. Free list from: Dave Weaver, 17 E. Mellen St., Hampton VA 23663.

Warren Spirit no. 2, 9, 11, Kitchen Spirit no. 35, and all Spirit Bags bound in hardcover. Contact Martin Williams, 2101 Shenandoah Rd., Alexandria VA 22308

OBSCURE & hard-to-find items from Will Eisner's personal archives now for sale. Free list if you send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Hollybrook Graphics, Rt.1 Box 329, Princeton WI 54968. New revised list available now.

EISNER ITEMS WANTED

SPIRIT no.18. Send price & condition to Bruce Pritchard, 48 Harvard St., Montclair NJ 07042.

HARDCOVER autographed copy of Baronet's "A Contract With God" wanted. Don Von Dollen, 3519 Wild Flower Way, Concord CO 94518.

FREE CLASSIFIED ad here! Just send your Eisner-related wants and sale items to: "Free Classifieds," c/o Kitchen Sink Press,

LETTERS

2000 YEAR OLD CARTOONIST?

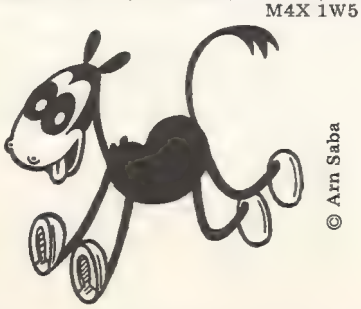
You are already the top of the heap. There is no one doing what you are—that is, writing real, 3-dimensional, sensitive, intelligent, fully realized literature in the comic form. And what form! The way you use your pages is totally original. Everyone who admires the graphic story medium, or who tries to work in it, will eventually have to turn to Eisner to see what the page can really do, to see how the narrative flow can continue even without the rigid, unyielding panel divisions that we are so used to.

Episode 2 of "Life Force" is yet another step forward in writing. The way you are beginning to weave the characters together, using the apartment building as a center, is a complex piece of narrative construction. And all of the characters are so individual, told with such precision of action and body language, that they speak for themselves while also being representative of their own threads in the social fabric. Being a sucker for romance, I love the emerging relationship between Becky and Elton—I like the totally unstated, yet perfectly clear way you have shown that her affection for him has enabled him to pick up his life anew. I would say it works the other way as well.

I could go on about each character, but you get the picture. I recently re-read *A Contract With God*, and while it holds up well, it now seems to be only a sketch for what is, so far, seeming to be your greatest work yet. "Life Force" seems to be a coming together of all the things you've done. One can even say that *The Spirit* years were the training ground for this work.

How wonderful and ironic that the best work in comics in America today is being produced not by the young bloods, but by the 2,000 year old cartoonist himself! Your only rival is the work of the Hernandez Bros., and they are obviously in your debt. You were an innovator in the '40s, and you are a master now. Long life, good health, keep going! Thank you!

Arn Saba
545 Sherbourne St., No. 2305, Toronto, Ontario M4X 1W5



ARN: Thanks very much. Of course, discriminating readers will know that Arn Saba is the Life Force behind the delightful NEIL THE HORSE, published by Aardvark-Vanaheim.

RELATING TO EISNER'S WORK

I started buying your hardcover books last year, and I enjoyed every one. I have no complaints. I have been a fan of yours since 1939. I used to pick up everything with your and Lou Fine's name on it.

Awhile back, I started buying the *Quarterly* and I think the entire book is fabulous. I recently heard that it's going to change to more pages, thick cover,and a price increase. I will buy it because it's a book that teens and the older fans of great comic art can relate to. There are too many superhero comics and not enough down-to-earth art. That's why the old comic art is selling in soft and hardcover now. I'm also a fan of Milton Caniff and I'm starting to obtain his *Steve Canyon* back issues. I hope to continue filling in my collection of the comics masters like Caniff, Lou Fine, and you.

Ralph Muccie
2240 Liberty St. Trenton NJ 08629

STRIKING A CHORD

I wish to congratulate Will Eisner on his latest masterpiece! Although to date I have only read the first six chapters of "Life Force", I am totally engrossed. This is the way illustrated novels are meant to be, a strong, compelling, beautifully written storyling, and fantastic art to match. No words were needed in panel 6 page 10, issue 2. The art said everything.

My favorite chapter so far is No. 6, "The Enchanted Prince." A lonely, broken shadow of a man trying to figure out what life is all about. I guess this strikes a chord in all of us at some time in our lives.

The strong storyline reminds me of great films of yesterday, such as Citizen Kane. Whereas today's "hits" are simple action films which leave you with nothing after you have left the cinema except a nasty headache, Citizen Kane is provocative and poignant, as is your work. Thank you for returning us to the way "comics" are meant to be.

Robert Larkin
10 Drew St., Brixham, Devon, TQ5 9JU England

MOLDING THE FUTURE

Even if he never started writing and drawing again in the late '70s, Will Eisner would have achieved immortality for *The Spirit*. But his more recent stuff is laying the groundwork for future greatness.

When I read "Life Force," "The City" pieces, or especially Eisner's treatises on comic art and writing, I can't help but think that some young Shakespeare is soaking it all in, biding his time, only to give it back again in a form that will make the novel obsolete. I believe that Eisner is molding the future of all fiction!

Tom Massarelli
2 Regent St. Worcester MA 01609

Send your letters of comment to: WEQ, Kitchen Sink Press, No.2 Swamp Road, Princeton WI 54968.

COMIC BOOK SECTION

The Detroit News
THE HOME NEWSPAPER

3 COMPLETE STORIES

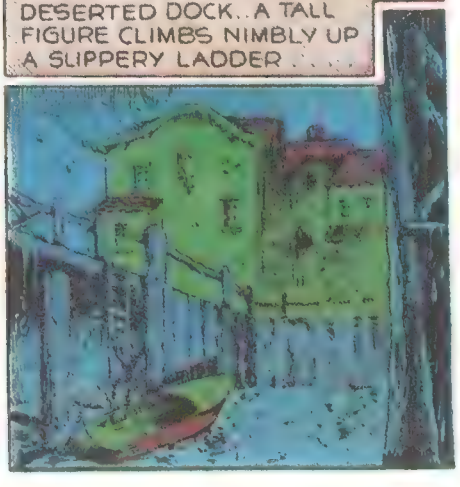
SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 1940

The SPIRIT

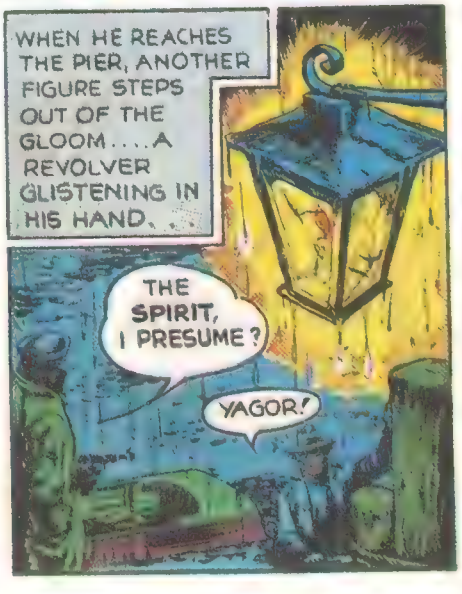
UNKNOWN TO THE WORLD, THE SPIRIT IS IN REALITY DENNY COLT, LONG BELIEVED DEAD . . . AS THE SPIRIT, HE FIGHTS CRIME AND CRIMINALS BEYOND THE REACH OF THE POLICE . .

COAST HAVEN, DARK MYSTERIOUS LITTLE FISHING VILLAGE ON THE NEW ENGLAND COAST. BEGUN MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO BY A SAILOR WHO RETURNED FROM THE FAR EAST, LADEN WITH STRANGE PRODUCTS . . . . . OUT OF THE TOURIST ROUTE, COAST HAVEN LIES ASLEEP, SILENT AND ALONE . . . .

ONE FOGGY RAINSWEPT NIGHT A SLEEK POWER BOAT, ITS MOTORS MUFFLED, SLIPS SILENTLY INTO A DESERTED DOCK. . A TALL FIGURE CLIMBS NIMBLY UP A SLIPPERY LADDER . . . .



WHEN HE REACHES THE PIER, ANOTHER FIGURE STEPS OUT OF THE GLOOM . . . . A REVOLVER GLISTENING IN HIS HAND. . .

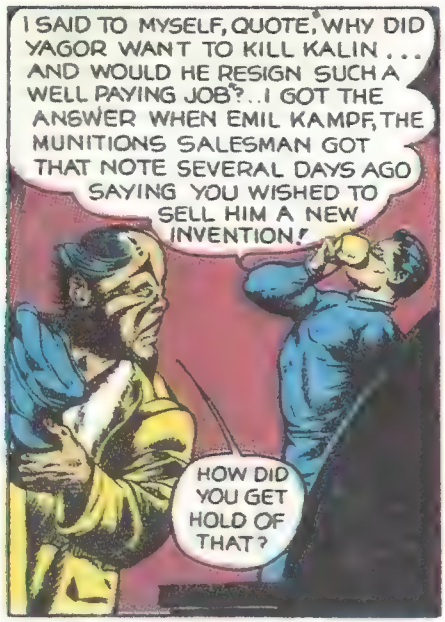


YOU ARE VERY CLEVER TO HAVE FOLLOWED ME HERE! IF I HAD KNOWN YOU WERE COMING I WOULD HAVE ARRANGED A WARMER RECEPTION!
THIS ONE IS WARM ENOUGH!

THIS WAY, SPIRIT!

MIND IF I MAKE MYSELF AT HOME? BRR... NASTY WEATHER.. ER..HOW ABOUT A CUP OF HOT COFFEE?
HOW DID YOU TRAIL ME?

EASIER THAN IT WOULD SEEM WHEN YOU RESIGNED AS CHIEF ENGINEER OF BATTLE ARMS CO., FOLLOWING THE INVENTER KALIN'S DEATH, I KNEW YOU WERE HIS MURDERER!

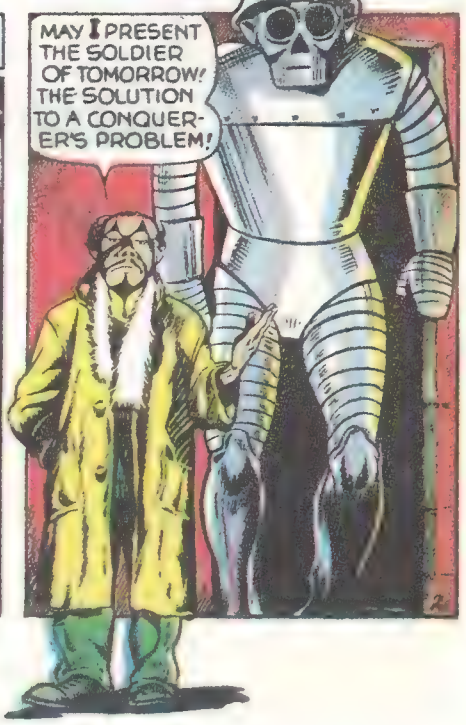

I SAID TO MYSELF, QUOTE, WHY DID YAGOR WANT TO KILL KALIN... AND WOULD HE RESIGN SUCH A WELL PAYING JOB?..I GOT THE ANSWER WHEN EMIL KAMPF, THE MUNITIONS SALESMAN GOT THAT NOTE SEVERAL DAYS AGO SAYING YOU WISHED TO SELL HIM A NEW INVENTION!
HOW DID YOU GET HOLD OF THAT?

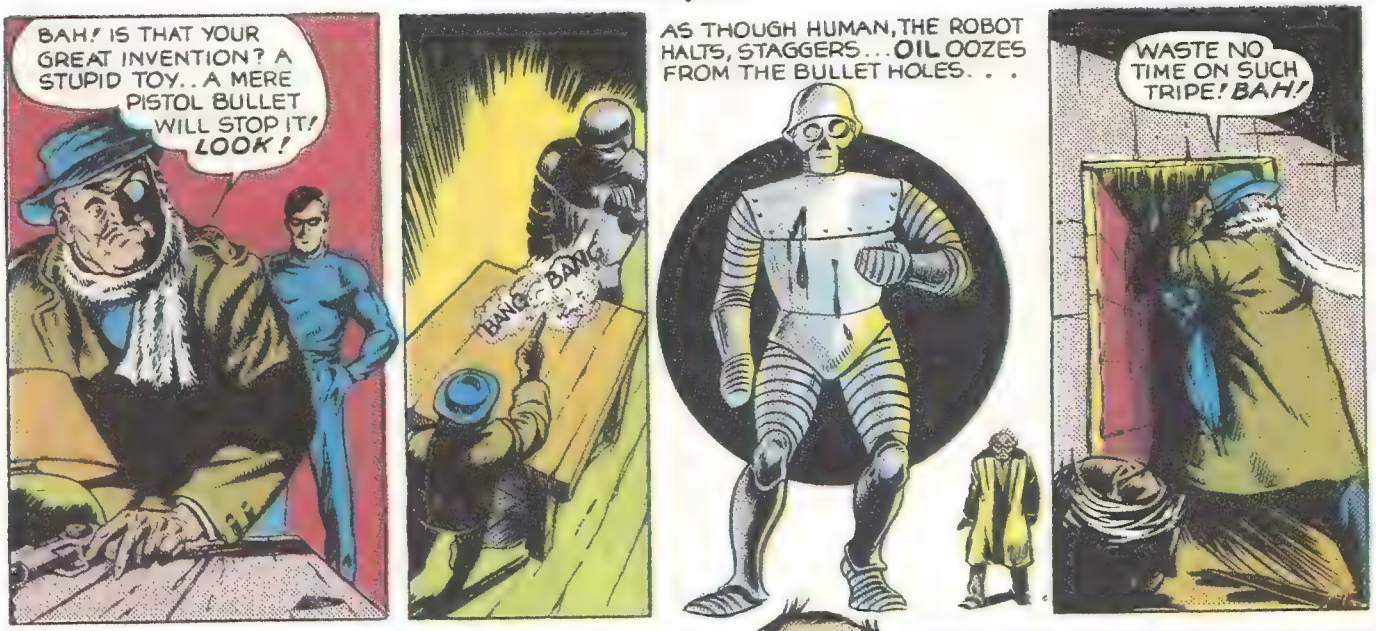
THE SPIRIT HAS WAYS..IT WAS AS CLEAR AS DAY..YOU STOLE KALIN'S SECRET PLANS..KILLED HIM AND BUILT UP THAT INVENTION AS YOURS... I'VE DECIDED TO LISTEN IN WHEN KAMPF ARRIVES!
IF YOU LIVE THAT LONG!

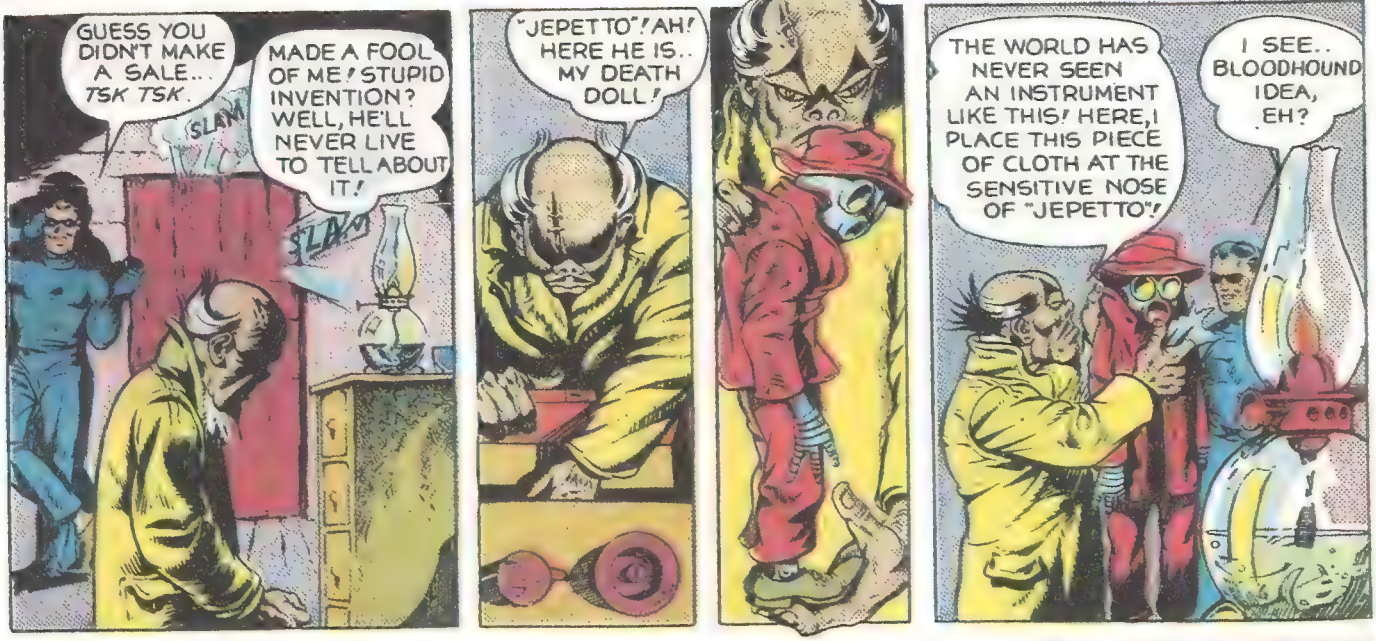
AT THAT MOMENT THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.
COME IN!
PUT THAT GUN AWAY! IT'S ME, EMIL KAMPF!

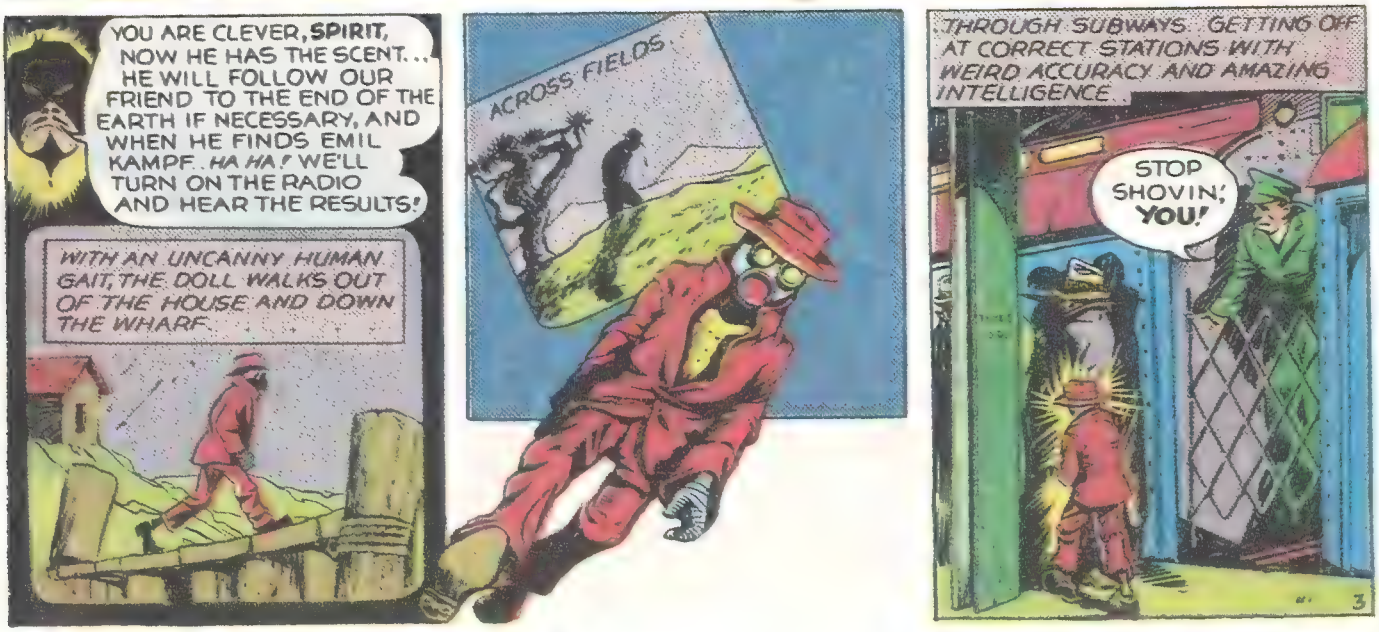
I AM SORRY FOR THIS INTRUDER. I'LL PUT HIM OUT OF THE WAY IF....
SAVE IT. I'M A BUSY MAN! NO TIME FOR SUCH NONSENSE! SHOW ME THE INVENTION!

YAGOR STEPS TO THE WALL, PUSHES A PANEL AND A DOOR SLIDES OPEN.
ONE OF THE CHIEF FAULTS WITH MODERN CONQUEST IS THAT LEADERS MUST DEAL WITH THINKING MEN!


MAY I PRESENT THE SOLDIER OF TOMORROW! THE SOLUTION TO A CONQUER-ER'S PROBLEM!


BAH! IS THAT YOUR GREAT INVENTION? A STUPID TOY.. A MERE PISTOL BULLET WILL STOP IT! LOOK!
BANG BANG
AS THOUGH HUMAN, THE ROBOT HALTS, STAGGERS... OIL OOZES FROM THE BULLET HOLES...
WASTE NO TIME ON SUCH TRIPE! BAH!

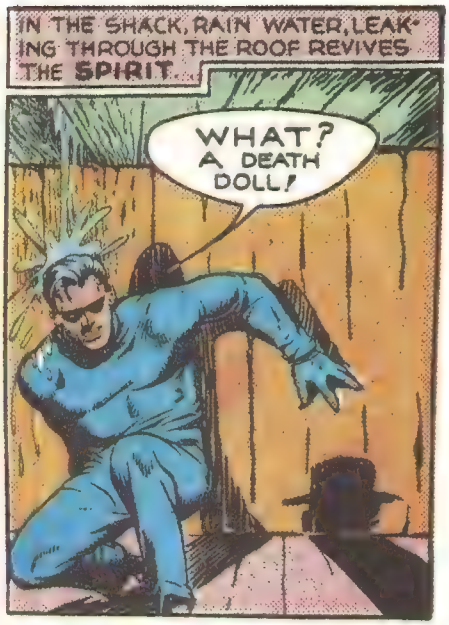

GUESS YOU DIDN'T MAKE A SALE... TSK TSK.
SLAM
MADE A FOOL OF ME! STUPID INVENTION? WELL, HE'LL NEVER LIVE TO TELL ABOUT IT!
SLAM
"JEPETTO"! AH! HERE HE IS.. MY DEATH DOLL!
THE WORLD HAS NEVER SEEN AN INSTRUMENT LIKE THIS! HERE, I PLACE THIS PIECE OF CLOTH AT THE SENSITIVE NOSE OF "JEPETTO"!
I SEE.. BLOODHOUND IDEA, EH?

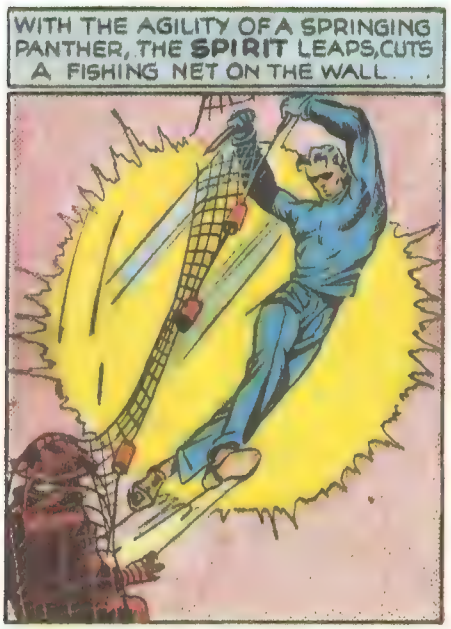

YOU ARE CLEVER, SPIRIT, NOW HE HAS THE SCENT... HE WILL FOLLOW OUR FRIEND TO THE END OF THE EARTH IF NECESSARY, AND WHEN HE FINDS EMIL KAMPF.. HA HA! WE'LL TURN ON THE RADIO AND HEAR THE RESULTS!
WITH AN UNCANNY HUMAN GAIT, THE DOLL WALKS OUT OF THE HOUSE AND DOWN THE WHARF...
ACROSS FIELDS...
THROUGH SUBWAYS... GETTING OFF AT CORRECT STATIONS WITH WEIRD ACCURACY AND AMAZING INTELLIGENCE...
STOP SHOVIN', YOU!
3

UP THE SIDE OF A WELL KNOWN HOTEL..THE SCENT IS HOTTER .... JEPETTO SPEEDS TOWARD HIS QUARRY....
WHAT IN THE?? A DOLL!
IF THIS IS ONE OF YAGOR'S TRICKS...
BUT BEFORE HE CAN FIRE, JEPETTO LEAPS.
WAAA!
BOOM!
BACK AT THE FISHING SHACK...
YOU FIEND! THAT TOY WAS REALLY A BOMB!
..WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST TO BRING YOU A NEWS BULLETIN! AN EXPLOSION JUST ROCKED THE AVENUE HOTEL..CLICK..
YES, YES! A "WALKING BOMB"! IMAGINE AN ARMY OF SUCH CREATURES..THE WORLD IS CHANGING FAST..MACHINES RULE US NOW..AND, SPIRIT, I WILL RULE MACHINES!
THAT'S A BIG SPEECH FOR A GUY WHO'S GOING TO JAIL!
I HAVE OTHER IDEAS, SPIRIT! SEIZE HIM, PET!
HUH?
UNAFFECTED, THE MONSTER HURLS THE SPIRIT AGAINST THE WALL, WHERE HE SINKS TO THE FLOOR UNCONSCIOUS..
4

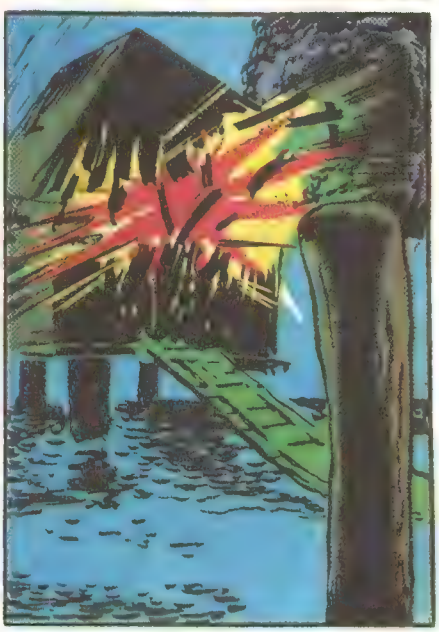
QUICKLY YAGOR RIPS A PIECE OF CLOTH FROM THE SPIRIT'S CLOTHES
I'LL SET THIS DEATH DOLL HERE..IN TEN MINUTES IT WILL REACH THE SPIRIT!

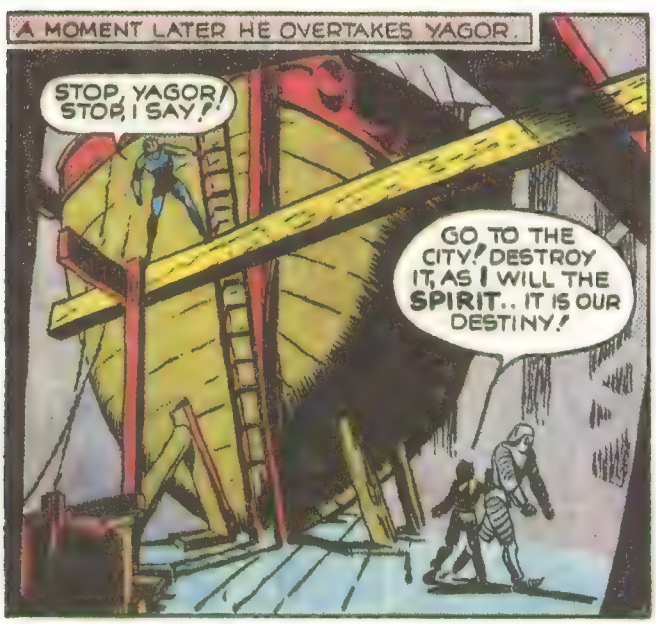
LEAVING THE SPIRIT TO HIS FATE, YAGOR AND HIS IRON MONSTER HEAD INTO THE RAIN.
WE BEGIN OUR INVASION! HA HA!

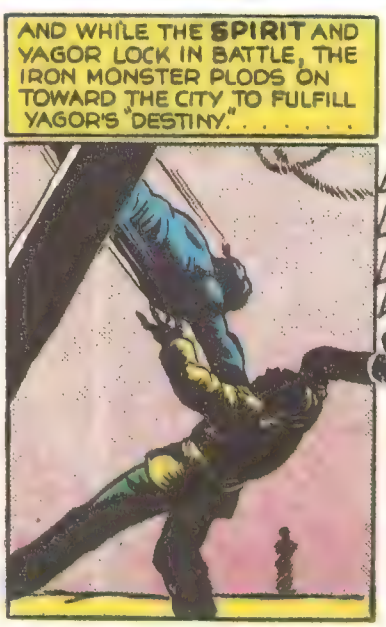

IN THE SHACK, RAIN WATER, LEAKING THROUGH THE ROOF REVIVES THE SPIRIT..
WHAT? A DEATH DOLL!

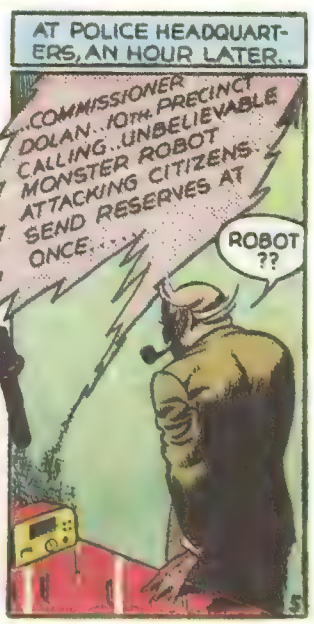

WITH THE AGILITY OF A SPRINGING PANTHER, THE SPIRIT LEAPS, CUTS A FISHING NET ON THE WALL...

LEAVING THE DEATH DOLL TRAPPED IN THE NET, THE SPIRIT CLEARS THE SHACK AND DIVES INTO THE WATER..




A MOMENT LATER HE OVERTAKES YAGOR.
STOP, YAGOR! STOP, I SAY!
GO TO THE CITY! DESTROY IT, AS I WILL THE SPIRIT.. IT IS OUR DESTINY!


AND WHILE THE SPIRIT AND YAGOR LOCK IN BATTLE, THE IRON MONSTER PLODS ON TOWARD THE CITY TO FULFILL YAGOR'S "DESTINY".....


AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, AN HOUR LATER..
..COMMISSIONER DOLAN..10TH. PRECINCT CALLING..UNBELIEVABLE MONSTER ROBOT ATTACKING CITIZENS. SEND RESERVES AT ONCE.....
ROBOT ??

CRUSHING, TEARING..... ITS GEARS GRINDING, THE MONSTER STAGGERS ON THROUGH THE CITY, SURROUNDED BY POLICE.
SUDDENLY THE MONSTER HALTS, OPENS A PANEL IN ITS BACK.. A HOST OF LITTLE DEATH DOLLS POUR OUT..
PUNCTURED IN A HUNDRED PLACES, ITS SHINY BODY IS STREAKED WITH OIL. THE MONSTER IS HALTED AT LAST....
AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS.
HELLO, DOLAN. THIS IS THE SPIRIT.. I'VE CAPTURED THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS MASS MURDER. I'LL BRING HIM IN, IF YOU PROMISE NOT TO TRY TO CAPTURE ME..
GOOD! I PROMISE. I'LL BE WAITING!
COMMISSIONER.... PRECINCT 12 REPORTS THE SITUATION NOW UNDER CONTROL!
FINE! AND THE SPIRIT IS GOING TO BRING IN THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS!

AFTER THE DOOR CLOSES, THE POLICEMAN PAUSES
HMM..SO THE SPIRIT IS COMIN'! NOW'S MY CHANCE TO CAPTURE HIM!
INSIDE DOLAN'S OFFICE
AH! HERE YOU ARE, SPIRIT!!
YES! AND HERE'S YOUR MAN YAGOR!
LOOKS A BIT MUSSED UP!
ER..OH YES.. WE, AHEM..HAD A LITTLE "DISCUSSION" BEFORE WE CAME!
AND NOW, DOLAN, I HOPE YOU'VE SET NO TRAPS FOR ME!
NO, SPIRIT... YOU'RE FREE TO GO!
BUT AS THE SPIRIT OPENS THE DOOR, THE SHADOW OF THE WAITING POLICEMAN HALTS HIM.
OH! OH! I SHOULDN'T HAVE TRUSTED DOLAN!
I HOPE THIS WORKS!
STICK 'EM UP!..ONE MOVE AND I'LL SHOOT!
THIS IS A GUN IN YOUR BACK!
..ONE HOUR LATER..
HEY O'ROURKE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING... STANDING WITH YOUR ARMS UP??
THE OLD PIPE TRICK! TSK TSK.

SUBSCRIBE!

EEE GOD IN HEAVEN EEE
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING TO ME
IN MY CONDITION I'LL DROP!
MOMMA, WHAT'S THE MATTER?
REBECCA, IS THAT YOU?
MOMMA, STOP SCREAMING WHAT'S THE MATTER
EEE, OH, I CAN'T STAND IT
HERE, HAVE A GLASS OF WATER!
YOUR FATHER WANTS A DIVORCE!

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Will Eisner's Quarterly No. 5

LIFE FORCE CONCLUDES!

Will Eisner's Quarterly No.5 will be off press in March. The new deluxe format —squarebound, heavy cover stock, expanded size and color section— retails for $5.95. In this issue, **Will Eisner's** new serialized graphic novel, *A Life Force,* comes to its dramatic conclusion. Let us only say that Eisner's power as an artist and storyteller is at its peak in this work. The conclusion is spare in its narrative, lush in its characterization, sometimes violent, sometimes tender. What will happen to the immigrant Americans who live at 55 Dropsie Avenue, The Bronx? *W.E.Q.* No.5 has the answers...

Also in this issue **Cat Yronwode** continues her look at the **Quality Comics** line and Eisner's studio in the early 1940s. Secrets are revealed and conflicts enumerated in this fascinating glimpse behind the scenes at comics' "Golden Age." *Plus!* A "Shop Talk" with E.C. great **Jack Davis!** And another pre-war *Spirit* in glorious original color, *Mr. Mystic,* and a new Eisner cover.

Back issues still available!

Steve Canyon No. 9

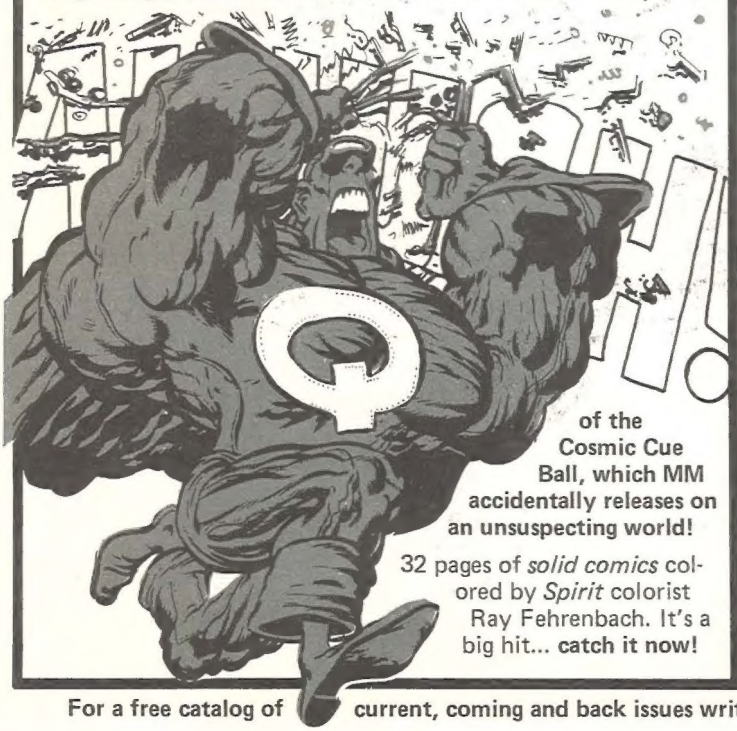
Milton Caniff's STEVE CANYON No.9, in its new squarebound format with expanded pages will be shipping in late February.

This issue features the introduction of **Doe Redwood,** hotshot woman pilot, who joins Steve and the Dragonflies in China. After Doe and Steve clash over her flying with the Dragonflies, they get together on a dangerous undercover assignment which carries them into the clutches of the notorious blackmailer, **The Pastfinder.**

Also in this edition is the long-awaited article on early Caniff mentor **Billy Ireland.** If his name fails to light a bulb it's only because he chose to keep his tremendous talent a regional secret. **Steve Canyon** is now a fat 72 pages of classic reprints on a bi-monthly basis! Don't miss an issue. You can catch up if necessary with back issues from your favorite dealer or direct from Kitchen Sink Press.

MEGATON MAN

In **No.2** of **Donald Simpson's** *Megaton Man,* our favorite atomic pile teams up with the fightin', flyin' and funny **Megatropolis Quartet!** This landmark episode hits newsstands on **Feb. 9. Thrill to Megaton Man's new uniform! Chill to the menace of long-thought-dead Red Meatball! Wonder at the terrible power**



of the Cosmic Cue Ball, which MM accidentally releases on an unsuspecting world!

32 pages of *solid comics* colored by *Spirit* colorist Ray Fehrenbach. It's a big hit... **catch it now!**

Spirit No. 8

Will Eisner's SPIRIT color comic No.8 will be in shops on **Feb. 9th.** Now a thick *44 pages* printing *five complete* classic stories from the 1940s (in chronological order for the first time). $2.95 — a bargain, particularly when considering the high price of original *Spirit* sections *if* they can be found!

In this issue we feature "Cargo Octopus" (formerly "Postage Stamp"), the *very first appearance* of **The Spirit's** arch-enemy, the faceless **Octopus.** Also featured are **Dulcet Tone, Silk Satin** and **Skinny Bones. The Spirit** and **The Octopus** have their respective gloved hands full in this legendary tale.

The second story, "Manitou," revolves around an Indian legend and hidden treasure. Sol Grundy, a thieving real estate agent, has more than hotel designs in mind when he finds out about the loot. A strange and terrible fate awaits him. Other stories are: "Spirit of Enterprise," "Who Killed Cox Robin," and "The Inner Voice." This action-packed series has received the highest praise. If you have not yet discovered Will Eisner or **The Spirit,** do yourself a favor and check out an issue! Back issues still available from dealers or KSP.

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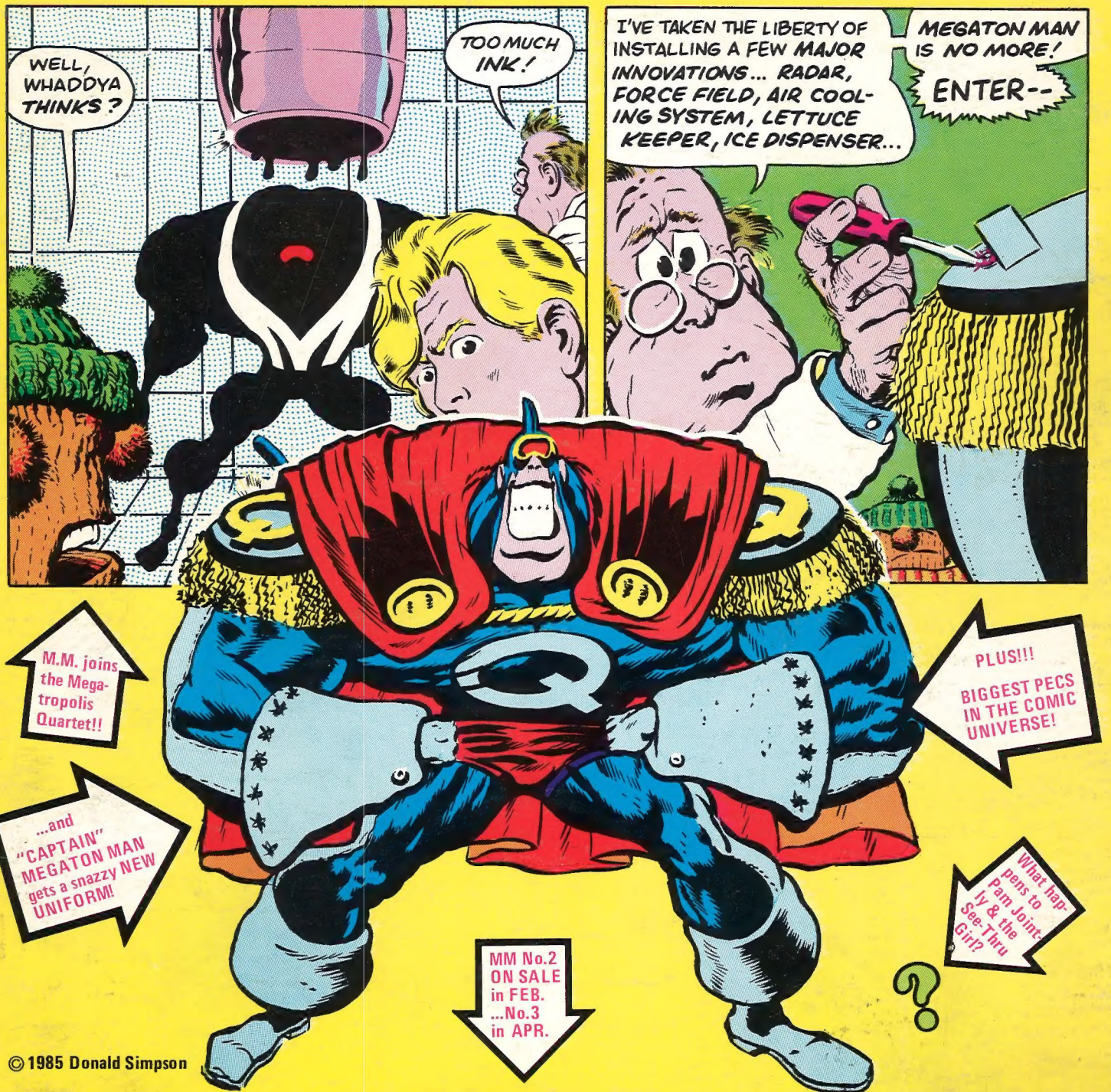
WELL, WHADDYA THINKS?
TOO MUCH INK!
I'VE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF INSTALLING A FEW MAJOR INNOVATIONS... RADAR, FORCE FIELD, AIR COOLING SYSTEM, LETTUCE KEEPER, ICE DISPENSER...
MEGATON MAN IS NO MORE!
ENTER--
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What happens to Pam Jointly & the See-Thru Girl?
MM No.2 ON SALE in FEB. ...No.3 in APR.

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